BHAI MAHARAJ SINGH

M.L. AHLUWALIA

SANT NIHAL SINGH

alias

BHAI MAHARAJ SINGH

SANT NIHAL SINGH
alias
BHAI MAHARAJ SINGH

A Saint-Revolutionary
of the 19th century Punjab

By
M. L. AHLUWALIA
M.A. (HONS.)
Assistant Director of Archives
Government of India

PUNJABI UNIVERSITY, PATIALA
1972

1972
First Edition : 1100

Published by Sardar Gurcharan Singh, M.A. P.E.S.(I), Registrar, Punjabi University, Patiala and Printed at Yugantar Press, Mori Gate, Delhi-6.

To

My Spiritual Guru

Swami Purshotam Ashram Ji Maharaj

Nainowal Jattan,

Hoshiarpur, Punjab

There will be another National War, let all the true Sikhs rise on the day fixed.

—Bhai Maharaj Singh
1849 A.D.

The Bhai is not an ordinary man. He is to the natives what Jesus Christ is to the most zealous of Christians.

—Mr. Vansittart
Deputy Commissioner, Jullundur
1850 A.D.

Bhai Maharaj Singh, a Sikh priest of reputed sanctity, and of great influence, the first man who raised the standard of rebellion beyond the confines of Multan in 1848, and the only leader of note who did not lay down his arms to Sir Walter Gilbert at Rawalpindi.

—Henry Lawrence
Resident at Lahore

FOREWORD

During the quarter of a century since India attained her Independence, a sizable amount of historical literature has been published both in India and abroad, analysing the various phases and facets of the struggle for freedom which the Indians had launched in various periods of history to achieve that goal. Their studies have been based, to a large extent, on the hitherto not known source-material available in the public archives of various countries as well as in the private papers of the statesmen, administrators and soldiers and public men who were involved in this thrilling saga of our times. These researches have more or less established that before the concept of one Indian nation emerged towards the later half of the nineteenth century, Indians had been relentlessly opposing the imposition of foreign rule on them whether by the Portuguese, the British or the French. India may have then lacked a single political entity, but the fact remains that the people inhabiting the Indian sub-continent were conscious of their unique cultural affinity as also of long common socio-religious traditions. These factors, among other things, inspired some great Indians in various periods of its history to stand up against foreign aggressions. And howsoever grim and prolonged might have been their struggle, and whatsoever the price they had to pay, they were always conscious of the righteousness of their cause, and they drew their strength from it.

It is really unfortunate that an attempt has been made by most of the contemporary European historians and administrators to create an impression that the early rebellions against their rule were either reactionary or feudal in character. An impression was also created that the common man rather welcomed the foreign rule, which was more just and enlightened

than the one it had replaced. The latest researches have proved the hollowness of these interested Anglo-Indian authorities, although none would deny that the European powers having by then gone quite ahead in the process of modernization, as a result of the agricultural and industrial revolutions, the system of government which they established in India was, to some extent, in tune with their modern outlook. But, it cannot also be denied that till the late nineteenth century, they were attempting to deal with the Indian situation in the same old-fashioned imperial traditions.

The time, I believe, has come to submit the established and biased accounts to a critical scrutiny. The Indian historians should accordingly study all the anti-imperial movements and rebellions launched by Indians in the various periods and regions of the country dispassionately and thoroughly, i.e., in depth and with utmost detachment. They should analyse their causes, study the reasons for their failure and also take into account their impact on the future course of the struggle.

In this small monograph, Shri M. L. Ahluwalia has studied one such anti-British movement, launched in the Punjab by Bhai Nihal Singh, popularly known as Maharaj Singh, soon after the British had established their control over the Lahore Kingdom as a result of the First Anglo-Sikh War of 1845-46. This study was made possible as a result of the information dug out by Shri Ahluwalia from the records lying in the National Archives of India and a few other places. Before his researches, very little was known about the political and military exploits of Maharaj Singh. The monograph not only contains a revealing information on the life and times of Maharaj Singh, but also on the nature of the freedom struggle launched by him and others in the Punjab, and the impact left by it on the course of events to follow.

Bhai Maharaj Singh belongs to that class of saint revolutionaries of India who have left a deep imprint on our freedom struggle—a struggle free from bitterness or calumny or ill-will. He stuck to his principles even though he was

subjected to all types of hardships and privations by the British. He was hounded from village to village and from house to house. Even price was fixed on his head. The way Maharaj Singh led his followers from various parts of the Punjab to Multan in the most difficult circumstances, and in the face of all the efforts made by the British authorities to checkmate his advance, brings to one's mind the similar exploits of Giuseppe Garibaldi, the famous revolutionary of Italy when he led, against all odds, one thousand of his Red Shirt volunteers across Naples in 1860. On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee celebrations of Indian Independence, I commend this monograph of Shri M. L. Ahluwalia for study both by the scholars and the general public.

Punjabi University
Patiala
August 11, 1972

KIRPAL SINGH NARANG

PREFACE

Hero-worship may, no doubt, be out of tune with the democratic traditions of our age, but a country or a community which does not honour its heroes often loses its moorings with all that may be good and noble in its past.

The Punjabi University, therefore, deserves our unreserved gratitude for taking up publication of monographs on the lives and times of those sons of the soil, but for whose dedicated self-denial, there would have been very little for us to be proud of in our history. Sant Nihal Singh, popularly known as Bhai Maharaj Singh, was one of those noble persons who spearheaded the freedom struggle soon after the British had realised their much-cherished aim of flying the Union Jack over the citadel of Lahore in place of the saffron-colour flag of the Sarkar Khalsa ji.

The records relating to Bhai Maharaj Singh had come to my notice among the Foreign and Political Department series of the National Archives of India as early as 1959. This chance discovery not only unfolded, for the first time, the revolutionary career of this great spiritualist of the 19th century Punjab but also provided a new insight about the part played by the Punjabis in the country's freedom struggle during the period.

I must take this opportunity to thank my present Director, Dr. S. N. Prasad and the ex-Director Shri K. D. Bhargava for kindly permitting me to undertake this work, and also giving me quite a few pertinent suggestions in the planning of this volume ; to Dr. Ganda Singh, and Dr. Fauja Singh Bajwa on whose standard works I have drawn liberally; to Sarvashri Gurdial Singh, M.A., Lecturer,

Dyal Singh College, Delhi; J. C. Srivastava, Librarian; K. S. Talwar, Assistant Archivist for their ungrudging co-operation. Above all I am beholden to S. Kirpal Singh Narang, Vice-Chancellor, Punjabi University, Patiala, for kindly writing the Foreword of this monograph and also deciding to release this publication as a part of the Silver Jubilee celebrations of Indian Independence although it was written in 1968 for the series "Heroes of the Punjab", being broughtout by this university.

New Delhi
7 August, 1972

M. L. AHLUWALIA

CONTENTS

I

THE HERITAGE OF MAHARAJ SINGH

The martyrdom of Bhai Nihal Singh, popularly known as Maharaj Singh, forms a precious link in the long chain of sacrifices made by the people of India for their redemption from the British yoke.

It would be wrong to presume that India went down before the British like nine pins. On the contrary it took Britain more than a century to overrun the entire country as they had to clear strong pockets of resistance at every step. Even when a grave socio-political crisis was starring the country in the face as a result of the loss of her independence, here and there, men endowed with noble ideals and stout hearts just refused to give in. Bhai Maharaj Singh was one of them. He preferred to bear all types of hardships and sufferings for the sake of national freedom than to submit to a foreign rule. In doing so, he was inspired by the spiritual heritage of the ten Sikh Gurus and the sacrifices made by their countless followers in the then recent past.

Guru Nanak Dev the first-Sikh Guru had appeared on the Indian scene at a time, when the country's socio-religious base was being completely shaken due to a number of reasons, including political instability. Guru Nanak Dev had hardly undertaken the task of bringing about much needed, socio-religious reforms to check this rot when Baber's invasions made

the situation more complex. The result was that Guru Nanak Dev found it difficult to abjure politics. His remarks about the evil deeds committed by the invader and the values of political independence have left a deep mark on the political philosophy of Sikhism.

Lamenting the evil designs of Baber, the Prophet of Peace said in great anguish that "With the bridal procession of sin Baber rushed down from Kabul and by force demanded the hand of the bride (India)".[1] Again after witnessing the barbarous atrocities committed by the Mughal forces on the helpless women of the vanquished, Guru Nanak Dev remarked, "Those who wore beautiful treasses and had the partings of their hair dyed with vermilion have their locks shorn with scissors, and dust thrown upon their stringes of pearls. Wealth and beauty, which had ensured luxurious lives for them, have now become their bane. Dishonoured, and with ropes round their necks, they are carried away by soldiers."[2] He Like-wise condemned the Lodhis for shamlessly surrendering to the Mughals at the battle of Panipat (1526). He said, "the dogs (Lodhis) have thrown away the priceless inheritance (India); When they are dead and gone, no one will remember them with regard."[3]

Such being Guru Nanak Dev's political views, an open rupture between his followers and the Mughals was only postponed for sometime, because of the

[1] Tilang 1, ghar 1, 5-1.

[2] Asa 1, Asht, 11-2, 3, 4, 5.

[3] Asa 1, 39-2.

'entante' cordial established between Emperors Humayun and Akbar and Gurus Angad, Amar Das and Ram Das. But no sooner Jehangir reversed this policy, by executing the fifth Guru Arjan Dev on flimsy grounds, the sixth Guru Hargobind was quick to challenge the Mughal sovereinty by assuming for himself the role of *piri* and *miri*—spiritual and temporal powers. Almost setting up a State within a State, Guru Hargobind adopted all the emblems of royalty—a standing force, a throne and drum. The Guru explained the need for this change to his contemporary Maratha saint Samarth Ram Das in the following words : "Shastara Garib Ki Rakhya, Jarvane Ki Bhakhya"—Arms were essential for the protection of the helpless and destruction of the tyrant[1]. Later on Guru Gobind Singh ascribed a similar reason for having organised the institution of "Guru Khalsa", following the grim tragedy of the execution of his father Guru Teg Bahadur at Delhi in 1675. In *Zafarnama*, his famous rejoinder to Emperor Aurangzeb, Guru Gobind Singh wrote that "it was lawful to take to the sword when all other avenues for the prevention of oppression had failed." For achieving this purpose the Guru converted the Khalsa into a fully corporate body which henceforth drew its authority from the impersonal Guru, *the Granth* and the democratic institution of the *Panj Pyaras*. These provided to freedom loving Khalsa, all the moral strength they needed during the most crucial

[1] Sakhian No, 39, quoted by Dr. Ganda Singh in his book "A brief Account of the Sikhs", p. 10.

period of their history, from the death of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708 to the attainment of sovereign power by Ranjit Singh in 1799.

But unfortunately the Khalsa was not destined to enjoy the fruits of political freedom for long. The glory, peace and prosperity which Punjab enjoyed for nearly forty years under Ranjit Singh was again on the verge of peril soon after his death in 1839. The crisis was due both to internal as well as external causes. Internally, the upstart Sikh aristocracy of Ranjit Singh, with a few exceptions, had become a byward for moral and social degeneration. Power divorced from integrity of character had converted the Sikh chiefs into moral wrecks. Love for righteousness and devotion to the creed of the Gurus, had given place to avarice and greed for more power at the expense of others. In this race for power almost all the Sikh chiefs who mattered, unwittingly and naively, fell a prey to British diplomacy.

Royalty too was not any the better of these chiefs. Members of Ranjit Singh's family, both male and female, son and father, brothers real or reputed, were all impatient to usurp the throne.

Once the Mughal time precedent of sword deciding claim to throne was adopted by the royal family of Lahore, the end could not be other than that which the Mughal Empire had earlier met with. Unscrupulous, shortsighted contenders to the realm of the Khalsa, not only fell by the same sword, one by one, but, in the process, shamelessly competed with others in selling their priceless inheritance to the

British, a crime, for which Baba Nanak had earlier held the Lodhis guilty. In 1841, Maharani Chand Kaur, the widow of Kharak Singh, and the mother of the ill-fated Naunihal Singh, had offered six annas of every rupee of the State revenues for purchasing British intervention against Kanwar Sher Singh. In turn Sher Singh offered even more alluring terms to the imperial power for gaining their recognition to his claim to the throne. He was prepared to part with all the cis-Sutlej possessions of the Lahore Durbar, plus 40 lakh rupees in cash. Later Maharaja Dalip Singh's opponent, Prince Peshora Singh further increased the bid, To the cis-Sutlej territories, he added the entire Kashmir Province for gaining the same end.

When the royalty and the chiefs were thus competing with one another in losing the priceless freedom for which the Khalsa had paid so dearly over the centuries, a few devoted souls among them attempted to check this national rot. They started powerful movement among the Sikh masses for a return to the puritan creed of the Gurus. The pioneers of this movement were Baba Bhag Singh of Pothohar, his worthy and more popular disciple Bhai Bir Singh of Naurangabad in Amritsar and the latter's successor Bhai Maharaj Singh.

Bhai Bir Singh was, however, the most influential among the three. He was a saint converted from a professional soldier. On the death of his father Sewa Singh in a compaign against the Nawab of Multan in 1808, Bir Singh took his father's place in the contingent of Sardar Nihal Singh Attariwala. After

the battle of Multan. Bir Singh participated in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's compaigns for the conquest of Kashmir and Peshawar. But after years of active service in the army, the warrior in Bir Singh gave place to the devotee in him. So powerful was his impact on the Sikh masses, that for almost every one of the pilgrims coming to Amritsar on the occasions of Dewali and Baisakhi, a visit to the *derah* of Bhai Bir Singh then called Santpura was a must. In 1833, Maharaja Ranjit Singh also went to Naurangabad to pay his respects to the great Sikh saint of his time. The Maharaja was so much impressed by His Holiness that he offered a jagir to his *derah* for meeting the expenses of *Guru Ka Langar*, or the free kitchen run by the Bhai. Bir Singh, however, declined this offer on the plea that the *langar* was run, not by him, but, by the inhabitants of Naurangad. On this, the Maharaja is said to have exempted the local inhabitants from the payment of land tax to the government by way of a compromise.[1] Such was the rich heritage of Bhai Maharaj Singh.

[1] Bir Binodh : copy at the Naurangabad Gurdwara.

II

THE MAN AND HIS MISSION

Although much written evidence is not available about the early life and ambitions of Nihal Singh *alias* Maharaj Singh, but one thing is very clear that he had laid down his life for a mission which could-be far from his mind in the early years of his life. Like all noble souls, Nihal Singh, during his child hood, was known for his pensive nature. He possessed a delicate mind in an equally delicate physical frame. The way this child used to feel happy in the company of religious mendicants was a clear pointer that he would devote his life to the attainment of spiritual elevation rather than enjoy the worldly pursuits. For this end in view he had entered the *derah* of Bhai Tota Singh Nirmala in Thikriwala, a village near Rubbon, his birth place and started learning from him the mysteries of the spirit.

Nihal Singh's trend was, however, changed by a chance meeting he had, soon after, with Bhai Bir Singh, the influencial Sikh priest and a great reformer of the times. The Sikh saint then happened to pay a visit to Rubbon, and Nihal Singh, like many others, had gone to listen to his discourse. He was so much influenced by the philosophy of Bhai Bir Singh that he at once entered his camp and followed the guru

[1] Bir Binodh—copy at the Naurangabad Gurdwara.

to his *derah*. The st ory goes that like Guru Amar Das, Nihal Singh us ed to bring water for Bhai Bir Singh's bath at 3 o 'clock in the morning, in season and out of season. He performed this duty so meticulously that very soon it become a sort of convention that none but Nihal Singh would perform this service to the guru. After bath, while the guru would sit for his morning meditation, Nihal Singh would attend to the *langur or kitchen*, after devoutly rubbing his forehead with the s hoes of each and every man and woman present for the morning congregational prayers. By the time, the prayers were over, Nihal Singh used to be ready with the *Karah prashad* t o be distributed among the devotees. With the name of Wahe-guru on his lips, Nihal Singh used to remain engrossed in these daily chores never caring for any of his personal needs. It is said that he had cut down his personal requirements to the most minimum. Both during summer and winter he retained the same outfit, a *kuchcha* or tight nicker for his underwear and a rough woollen rug to cover his head and shoulders. Thus serving his guru, Nihal Singh was, slowly but surely, reaching the heights of spiritual glory, His mild tone, his sweet demeanour and ever smiling countenance all indicated that his mind was fully immersed in the inner bliss of his noble self. Before long the devoted Nihal began to be revered by all the people who started addressing him with the respectful epithet of "Maharaj." It began to be believed that Maharaj had the mystical power of making the cooked food in the guru's kitchen sufficient for any number

of people who might gather for the prayers everyday. The Naurangabad *derah* still possesses an extraordinarily big sized iron *karaha* in which, they say, Maharaj used to prepare *prashad* for the devotees. According to one tradition, he had once used his own arm in place of the stirring rod or the *ka·cha* to stir the boiling cereals.

Politics was still far from the minds of both the guru and his favourite disciple. As already discussed in the beginning, Bhai Bir Singh's main mission in life was to bring about the same attitude of purity and selfless service among the Sikhs which was their greatest virtue during the times of the ten Gurus. But as the political life in the Punjab began to vitiate soon after the demise of Maharaj Ranjit Singh, it was not possible for any great reformer to remain unconcerned about the political feuds and frauds daily witnessed by all in the streets of Lahore. Bhai Bir Singh accordingly began to express his concern about the political malaise then afflicting his State.

The vested interests, however, used this opportunity to involve him in political factionalism without his being aware of it. The parties in this game were the astute British officials, then dealing with the Lahore Durbar, and their touts the much maligned Sandhanwalia chiefs led by Sardar Lehna Singh. The British game was to involve the Sikhs of the Punjab against the efficient but anti-British dogra Prime Minister of Lahore Raja Hira Singh.

The scheme worked very well. Lehna Singh was able to get on to his side a number of other anti-dogra Sikh chiefs, all moving with their armed followers to the camp of Bhai Bir Singh then at Sarhali near Amritsar. Without caring to assess that the very survival of the Sikh State of Lahore depended on the establishment of an efficient and strong government during the infancy of Maharaja Dalip Singh, the anti-dogra faction led by Lehna Singh was prepared for an early showdown with Hira Singh. Sarhali, the abode of spiritual bliss and a center of universal brotherhood was thus made a centre of foul political confrontation. Raja Hira Singh sent an order to these chiefs to clear off from the spiritual sanctuary of Bhai Bir Singh but on their refusal to comply with the government's orders the Prime Minister was compelled to despatch a powerful military contingent to do the needful. Realising the gravity of the situation, Bhai Bir Singh tried to intercede by appealing to both sides to avoid an armed clash but when he was attempting this, a misdirected bullet hit him in the thigh, wounding him seriously, To the misfortune of all Punjabees, the saint of Sarhali, their much beloved and respected Bir Singh, was thus the first to fall a victim to this treachery. Bir Singh died after a few days.

People's passions rose high as soon as the news of the unexpected martyrdom of Bhai Bir Singh spread far and wide. Without caring to know the dangerous political game a few were playing at the cost of all, people began to curse the

Lahore Government as responsible for the death of the guru. The soldiers of the Lahore Durbar were given the nickname of "guru mar" or the killers of the guru. Thus inspite of their best efforts to streamline the administration and raise government finances then in a state of miserable neglect, the Dogras began to be despised by the common man as anti-Punjabi. This brought about the end of Hira Singh's administration and before long, Punjab lost a strong Prime Minister it needed. This was exactly the situation which the British and their henchmen in the Punjab wanted to develop.

How the British exploited this situation later on, forms another topic for study with which one is hardly concerned here, What matters here is that it was in this tense situation that Bhai Maharaj Singh was chosen to succeed to the *guddi* of Bhai Bir Singh. This undoubtedly proved a turning point in his career. It is said that he never got over the fact that his guru had fallen a victim to the political factionalism then prevailing in the Punjab. For sometime he could not decide about his future course of action. But as soon as the British took over the Lahore Government following the Anglo-Sikh war of 1845-46, he realised what he had to do. For any staunch nationalist freedom from foreign control must precede every other mission even of socio-religious reforms. It was this feeling which made this great religious missionary an equally great freedom fighter. He accordingly made over the *guddi* of Naurangabad

to Bir Singh the junior, another disciple of Bhai Bir Singh and himself shifted to Amritsar. Hear he set up his headquarters at the place called *Samdu ka Talab*. From then onwards he mostly remained busy touring the Punjab villages in the company of Baba Ram Singh an other spiritual leader, who later on succeeded to the *gudai*. This was the man, who, during 1847-49 took upon himself the impossible task of saving the sovereign kingdom of Sarkar Khalsaji from extinction. To him belonged the credit of having kept up the struggle against the British even when the kingdom of Lahore was annexed in March 1849 and the people by and large having acquiesced to the inevitable. What sustained Maharaja Singh in this arduous task was his rich spiritual heritage.

III

MOTIVE FORCE BEHIND THE PREMA CONSPIRACY

Maharaj Singh's revolutionary career starts with the famous Prema conspiracy case. This conspiracy was the first outburst of popular discontentment against the British in the Punjab. Prema and his brother Mohra, the two leading figures in the conspiracy, were the residents of Wazirabad. They had earlier served with the dogra Raja Gulab Singh. They seemed to have been picked up by the anti-British elements to perform the dastardly acts, for the simple reason, that they were known desperados. The plan was to murder Henry Lawrence, the British Resident and the Pro-British chiefs while assembled at a meeting scheduled to be held in the Shalimar gardens, Lahore. The Bhai is said to have blessed the conspiracy by giving a sword to Prema for the purpose.

In order to understand the reasons which compelled Maharaj Singh to lend his support to this plot, one has to go back to the history of a year of British occupation of the Lahore Kingdom.

By the treaty of March 1846, the British had sliced the kingdom of Lahore into three portions, one handed over to Raja Gulab Singh forming the State of Jammu and Kashmir ; another including

Jullundur Doab and cis-Sutlej territories of the kingdom annexed to the British empire, and the third left to be nominally ruled by Ranjit Singh's minor son Dalip Singh. The traitor Lal Singh with the title of Raja was made the Prime Minister of this turncated kingdom with Maharani Jind Kaur, mother of Dalip Singh as the Regent. The real power, however, vested with Henry Lawrence, Agent to the British Governor General.

In his book 'History of the Sikhs' M'cGregor very significantly notes, "In appearance, it (the Government of Lahore) exists ; there is a king, a prime minister and an army but one and all are dependent upon British power. The capital of the country is not garrisoned by the Sikhs. It is entirely in the hands of the paramount power, whose soldiers are lent for a time to preserve the resemblance of a government, but in reality to keep possession of the advantages already gained until the season of the year shall enable the Governor-General to annex the whole to the British possessions if such a step be deemed necessary."

It was, of course, not however, deemed advisable to annex the kingdom outright, as there could be no outward justification for that. But the Governor-General was determined not to withdraw the British force from Lahore after a year as provided in the treaty of March 1846. It was, therefore, decided to force another treaty upon the minor Maharaja, according to which, the British got the right to remain in the Punjab upto the time Dalip Singh attained the age of majority. The whole

affairs was made to look as if the British were not ready to stay beyond December 1846 as required under the existing treaty, but that they did it on the request of the Lahore Durbar, who was keen to have the protection of the British arms for some years more.

Maharani Jindan and Dewan Dina Nath had seen througb this clever game and opposed any new terms beyond the stationing of a few British regiments at Lahore. Currie the astute British foreign Secretary, then negotiating the new treaty was, however, able to neutralize the opposition of Jindan and Dina Nath, through Sardars Tej Singh and Sher Singh Attariwala who agreed that all power should be vested in the British Resident and the Maharani should be pensioned off. When the Maharani became aware of the new arrangements she almost scolded Sher Singh with the remarks that, "She did not expect him who had decided to give his own daughter (Sic) to Maharaja Dalip Singh to act in that way."[1]

The treaty of Bhyrowal had thus rudely shaken the Maharani out of her wits, although during the year ending with the signing of Bhyrowal treatly the people of the Punjab had already witnessed many more shocks under the British hegemony, one of these was the cow-row incident of 21 April 1846.

[1] Umdat-ut-Tawarikh by Sohan Lal, *Daftar* V, p. 30
Maharaja Dalip Singh had been betrothed to the daughter of Sardar Cattar Singh Attariwala : Edwards and Merivale, Life of Henry Lawrence, pp. 407-8,

On that day an European soldier on duty lost his wits when a herd of cattle passing near him got scared and started running helter-skelter. As a result he started brandishing his sword and injured quite a few of the animals. The news of the incident enraged the entire Hindu and Sikh population of the Capital. In protest, the shopkeepers struck their work and in no time a large crowd had assembled in the city along with the owners of the injured cattle to protest against what they considered the unholy act of the Europeans. Fearing that this sudden commotion resulting from religious frenzy of the people might create further complications, Henry Lawrence along with M'c Gregor and Herbert Edwardes, his two able offlcers, personally went to meet and pecify the owners of the injured cattle. But as soon as they entered the house of one of them the angry crowd on the roof tops started hurling brick bats on them. As a result Edwardes was hit on the head. Upon this Henry Lawrence ordered Prime Minister Lal Singh and Sardar Sher Singh Attariwala to apprehend the owners of all the nearby houses from which the brick bats were coming. But finding that the execution of his orders was being delayed by both, Henry Lawrence took this task upon himself, and with the help of his escort of Mohammedan infantry men, rounded up a number of agitators from the crowd. He also ordered that the three adjoining buildings, from the roofs of which stones were hurled on the British Offlcers, should be raised to the ground at once. In order to make an example of it, Henry Lawrence sentenced Rulia Brahmin, one

of the arrested persons, to death, while the other two were to be exhibited before the public while in fetters and their faces blackened.

Lawrence was so much determined to carry these measures to the bitter end that he even refused to oblige the young Maharaja and his Courtiers who all called upon him on the next morning in a bid to save the doomed Brahmin from the gallows. The British Resident who was still acting as nothing more than a formal guardian of the young Maharaja and his kingdom, refused to show any consideration for the religious sentiments of the Maharaja and his subjects. On the contrary, the British soldier who had acted contrary to the law of the land, was let off with a mere warning to be more careful in the future. Henry Lawrence justified his action to his superiors with the remarks that it was intended, "to make some impression on the mind of the rest of the people of Lahore."[1] What a poor commentary on the Anglo-Sikh treaty of March 1846.

Following on the heels of the cow incident came the refusal of the Sikh garrison at Kangra to surrender the fort to the British according to the terms of the treaty of March 1846. Sardar Sunder Singh, a brave and veteran soldier of the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who was then commanding the fort of Kangra considered its transfer to the British as the worst act of disloyalty to his Maharaja. But the British too prized this place

[1] H. Lawrence to Currie, dated 22nd April 1846.

more than anything. To Henry Lawrence conquest of Kangra was no less important to the British empire than the conquest of "Gibralter."[1] He, therefore, despatched a strong force with eighteen pounder heavy cannon under Henry Lumsden and by 18 May, 1846, the British flag was unfurled over the historic fort.

Then followed the Kashmir fiasco. The Governor Shaikh Imamud-din, first refused to hand over the valley to Maharaja Gulab Singh, who had paid for it under the treaty of March 1846, but when faced with a challenge from British arms, he not only made over his charge to the dogra family, but also confessed that previously he had acted under the secret instructions of Minister Lal Singh. On this Lal Singh was made to pay for his faithlessness to his benefactors. He was deprived of the Prime Ministership as well as his personal estates in the kingdom.

The above two events though in no way connected with each other do prove that the vivisection of the kingdom of Lahore had deeply injured the national sentiments of the people of the Punjab. At the same time, the dismissal of thousands of veteran Sikh soldiers of the Durbar, confiscation of the jagirs of each and every one suspected of complicity against the British, dismantling of the forts of all important chiefs and confiscation of their personal cannon and other weapons had created widespread disaffection against the British at all levels of the population. Apart from political and national consi-

[1] Edwards & Merivale, Vol. 1, pp. 199-200.

derations, these measures had adversely affected the economy of the Province. It was not possible for all the dismissed soldiers to be absorbed in agricultural and artisan jobs, while the chiefs, whose jagirs were confiscated, had no alternative source of livelihood left for them, apart from the humiliation caused by the reduction of their status in the society.

There was so much of resentment against these measures that, as early as March 1847, a deputation of the zamindars from Manjha met Dewan Dina Nath at Lahore to plead against this wanton repression. The Dewan had no doubt promised that no further oppression on them would be allowed, but this assurance proved futile, as within a few weeks of the meeting of the deputationists, two Companys of troops sacked the residence of, no less a person than, Sardar Ranjore Singh Adalti in a bid to confiscate his cannon and treasure. In protest Sardar Ranjore Singh resigned his post on 21 April 1847.[1] To add fuel to fire, the treaty of Bhyrowal, had left the queen mother a highly stung person.

Prema Conspiracy was thus the first open symptom of this general disaffection and it was not unnatural that the humiliated Maharani Jindan and the patriotic saint Maharaj Singh should have been deeply involved in the affair. Reports had reached Henry Lawrence in early March 1847 that the *derah* of Bhai Maharaj Singh at Amritsar was the nerve centre of intense political activity. As a first step,

1 Lahore Political Diaries, Vol. III, pages 75, 110-11.

the Resident had ordered that Maharaj Singh should leave Amritsar the spiritual capital of the Sikhs, and retire to his *derah* at Naurangabad, about 25 miles from there.[1]

The Conspiracy was, however, leaked out three days ahead and Prema and his other active associates were apprehended in Jammu on May 1847 and brought to Lahore. Reporting to the Governor General on 1 June, 1847, Henry Lawrence wrote, "the man Prema has now been four time before me; he says that Bhai Maharaj Singh an influential sikh priest at Amritsar, regarding whose suspicious conduct I have had many reports, gave him to do what ever Maharanee ordered him and in the first instance to kill Dewan Deena Nath, Sardar Tej Singh, Sirdar Sher Singh ; a favourite and Munshee of Maharanee met him thrice with messages from his mistress and told him that such and such troops and chiefs had joined. There is entire connection between Prema's statement and those of parties examined during the last two months."[2] The Resident also wrote that for further investigations he had ordered Maharaj Singh to present himself before the Council.

Bhai Maharaj Singh, on his part, refused to oblige the Resident and in order to avoid arrest went underground. This was the starting point of an open conflict between the British and Maharaj Singh.

[1] Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, by Sohan Lal, *Daftar* V, p. 37.
[2] Lahore Political Diaries Vol. III.

Having been outwitted by Maharaj Singh in the first round the British Resident got arrested all the personal attendants of the Bhai at his *derahs* at Amritsar and Naurangabad, and when all the third degree methods used against them failed to bring forth any clue about their master's whereabouts, orders were issued to ransack the entire tract of Manjha which was supposed to be the stronghold of Maharaj Singh. At the same time the property attached to his *derahs* was confiscated and a reward of one thousand rupees put on his head.[1] Orders were simultaneously issued that, if any one should harbour the Bhai, his jagir, house and all other personal property would be confiscated. Strict instructions were despatched to all the Kardars and other government officials to help the authorities in capturing the offender at the earliest opportunity.[2] None of the above measures, however, proved effective as a result of which Jeewan Singh who was first given the task of arresting the Bhai was imprisoned on charge of laxity and Baba Lachman Singh Kotwal of Amritsar was given the difficult duty of effecting the Bhai's arrest under the supervision of Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia.

On 21 June Baba Lachman Singh reported that Bhai Maharaj Singh was taking shelter in the village of Hadiara. Accordingly orders were sent to Lala Hans Raj the officer in charge of the area to seize all the zamindars of that village and send

[1] Lahore Political Diaries, Vol. III, pp. 175-76, 180 & 185.
[2] Ibid, p. 182.

them to Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia for interrogation. As nobody otherwise seemed prepared to disclose his whereabouts a force of 100 sowars was despatched to pursue the Bhai in the villages. Orders were also issued to Sardar Lehna Singh to sell by auction the confiscated property of Maharaj Singh.[1]

Maharaj Singh was not the least deterred by any one of these proceedings. On the contrary he continued moving from village to village, preaching about the necessity of immediate action against the enemies of the Khalsa. In this task he had with him the moral support of the entire nation.

[1] Ibid, p. 186.

IV

LEADS THE BLESSED THOUSAND TO MULTAN

While Maharaj Singh was still preparing the ground for the impending trial of strength with the British, news came to him about the revolt of Dewan Mul Raj Governor of Multan.

Multan being a great commercial centre the British had an eye on it as early as the thirties of the nineteenth century. That is why that under the Commercial agreement of 1835 they had obtained from Maharaja Ranjit Singh the right to use Mithankot as an entrepot for British trade with the neighbouring countries in the North-West. Further, during the first Anglo-Afghan war, 1839-42, the Province of Multan was virtually converted into a British base for supplies to Kabul. After the conquest of Sind in 1843, the British began to cast greedy eyes on Multan itself and during the first Anglo-Sikh war, 1845-46 some British officials even suggested the desirability of invading Multan from Sind and detaching it from the Lahore Kingdom.[1]

In December 1846, J. D. Cunningham, then Assistant Agent to the Governor General, North-West Frontier, held a meeting with the Nawab of

[1] Secret Consultations, 26 December 1846, Nos. 302 & 1079.

Bahawalpur at Fazilka in order to use his good offices to win over Mul Raj to the side of the British. After the meeting, Cunningham wrote to Charles Napier, Governor of Sind, "If the British Government desired to bring him (Mul Raj) over to its interests, he the Nawab would undertake to do so.[1] The occasion to test the fidelity of Mul Raj however never arose as in the meantime the British were able to subjugate the entire kingdom of Punjab. Thereafter the main issue for the British to settle was whether to allow Multan to remain under the governance of Mul Raj whose father was known for anti-British sentiments or to make some other arrangements more suitable to them. Henry Lawrence, then Agent to the Governor General at Lahore seems to be in favour of the *status quo* in Multan as may be evident from his first report to his Government, on this issue. He wrote, "Mooltan forms the seat of a very powerful Viceroyalty under the rule of an energetic Hindu, at whose disposal is placed a large force with very extensive powers for the purpose of over-awing the refractory subjects of the Sikh Government in the vicinity..........The Banking influence of Multan is considerable, greater than that for which Shikarpore has so long been celebrated, and there are sowcars and shroffs in its Bazars who are reputed to be capable of commanding a million specie. The Mooltan Hoondees (bills of exchange) are the great mediums of transacting business over the whole of the vast countries where

[1] Secret Consultation, 26 December 1846, No. 302.

agents are scattered, and are always considered as cash from the Caspian to the Ganges."......"Much of the present prosperity of Mooltan and its dependencies," he continues, must be attributed to the full freedom to the Hindoo merchants and bankers, and the judicious appointment of one of their own class as a ruler."[1] In another report he stated that according to the records of the Lahore Durbar, the province of Mooltan yielded roughly rupees 34,95,542 per annum of which rupees 21,66,588 were paid into the Durbar treasury, rupees 9,83,917 went for expenses of administration and rupees 3,45,037 as the Governor's profit :[2]

Henry Lawrence's approach to the Multan question was fully supported by John Lawrence who officiated for his brother at Lahore for some months thereafter. He wrote in October 1846, "He (Mul Raj) is, however, the only popular administrator throughout the Punjab. His force is estimated at about 6,000 men and guns drawn by Horses and Bullocks in which of course, those in forts are not included."[3]

However there seems to be a strong anti-Mul Raj lobby at the Lahore Durbar headed by no less a person than the Chief Minister Raja Lal Singh, therefore, decided to force the issue in anticipation Lal Singh, of any possible British design. In May 1846, he appointed his cousin Missr Bhagwan Singh as the Governor of Jhang and sent a force to

[1] Secret Consultation, 26 December 1846, No. 15.
[2] Secret Codsultation, 26 December 1846. No. 126.
[3] op. cit. No. 1079.

disposses Mul Raj of the rich tract, The Dewan first defeated Bhagwan Singh and then appealed for justice to the Lahore Durbar. Henry Lawrence was then in Simla.

At this stage Henry Lawrence's efforts to save the face of Lal Singh confused the issue, although he had advised the Governor-General to the contrary. He wrote, "considering that the son of Sawan Mull appears to follow in the footsteps of his father, and to pay some respect to the rights of the people, it appears to me that his seat would be ill filled by a brother of the minister, or by a rough regulation general or by a ruder Sardar : or a mere Mutsadi sent to establish a new family." But to Mul Raj, Henry Lawrence wrote on 22 June 1846 from Simla saying, "It has lately come to my knowledge that you are pursuing a course totally opposed to the wishes of the British Government." Then charging him with the design of attempting to appropriate Multan, the Resident warned Mul Raj, that, "this the British Government will not only never permit, but should it be necessary at this time, will assist the Lahore Durbar in the preservation of its rights."[1]

It will not be necessary to dilate here any further on the details of the controversy between Mul Raj and the Lahore Durbar, but as a result of this episode the Dewan had lost all faith in the British.

Considering the disaffection of Mul Raj against the British as a God sent opportunity, Maharani Jindan lost no time in establishing, what we may

[1] Secret Consultation, 26 December 1846, No. 952.

call, the Jindan-Mul Raj axis against the British. To achieve this purpose she sent in May 1847 her trusted maid servant named Jowai to Multan. The Governor accorded Jowai a V. I. P. treatment, and after a few days stay at Multan, gave her leave of departure with a *Khillut* and two hundred rupees in cash, a rare distinction for an ordinary attendant of the royal family. In reply to the Maharani's secret letter, Mul Raj, assured that she should "consider him her servant to command."[1] The political dialogue, thus started between Mul Raj and Jindan was maintained thereafter through secret agents, resulting in the revolt of the former against the British in April 1848. Commenting on this episode, Kaye, significantly notes that, "When Mul Raj raised the standard of rebellion in Mooltan, he but anticipated a movement for which the whole country was ripe.........and the Sikhs chafing under the irritating interference of the European stranger, were about to make a common effort to expel him."[2]This is also confirmed by Ganesh Dass in his famous book Chahar Bag-i-Punjab. He writes "On the appearance of this fresh trouble most of the people after knowing this event and having intense enthusiasm came out of their houses and went to Multan to join Mul Raj inspite of the repeated warnings given by the Resident forbiding people to join the revolt, but no body paid any heed to it. People used

[1] Lahore Political Diaries, Vol. III.

[2] History of Sepoy War in India by John William Kaye, p. 20.

to say that it was difficult for the British to conquer Multan.[1]

As noted earlier Maharaj Singh had already enthused the Sikhs of the Central Punjab for taking up arms against the British. Lord Dalhousie reported this matter to the authorities in England in the following words. "Shortly after the banishment of the Ranee and Revolt of Mool Raj, Bhai Maharaj Singh raised the standard of rebellion in the Manjah. He speedily collected many thousand men, traversed the districts towards the North of the Doab ; was every where received with favour and gathered numbers daily."[2] It was thus natural that Mul Raj should have sought the cooperation of Bhai Maharaj Singh, once he had taken up arms against the British. For this purpose the Dewan sent his trusted agent named Khira to meet the underground saint rebel. Khira met the Bhai at Parmanand, a village near Dinanagar in Batala. In the letter which Khira delivered to Maharaj Singh, Mul Raj wrote, "without you the Sikhs won't assemble." In view of some delay in getting a favourable response from Maharaj Singh, Mul Raj sent him another appeal for help.[3] As a result of these entreaties, Maharaj Singh set out towards Multan with some 400 horsemen placed under the command of a veteran soldier Sahib Singh of Sangla hill. Before setting out for Multan, Maharaj Singh held a grand *lungar* or free kitchen near Batala for the success of his mission.[4]

[1] Chahar-Bag-i-Punjab edited by Dr. Kirpal Singh, p. 386.
[2] Secret Consultation, 7 October 1848, No 621.
[3] Secret Consultations 31 January 1851, Nos. 21 and 23.
[4] Chahar Bagh-i-Punjab, p. 386.

Bhai Maharaj Singh's siding with Mul Raj so electrified the situation that there were sporadic disturbances in Batala, Kalanaur and Nurpur. Rumour also spread upto Hazara and Peshawar that Maharaja Dalip Singh had also disappeared from Lahore and taken to Multan.[1]

It was thus natural that the first task of the British Resident at Lahore was to prevent the Bhai from reaching Multan. This led to a hot pursuit of rebels by the authorities. At first the Resident ordered Tek Chand and Lachman Singh to pursue Maharaj Singh with the help of one platoon and one regiment of *Rissalah*. As this force was considered insufficient it was reinforced after three days with one more platoon, 4 cannon and a Regiment from the Anarkali Cantonment under the charge of Sardar Hari Singh.[2]

The author of Chahar Bagh-i-Punjab, writes that when the Resident came to know that Bhai Maharaj Singh with all the disciples of the late Baba Bir Singh and many other volunteers whom he had inspired had also left for Multan, he despatched many informers, newswriters and platoons of soldiers for detecting and arresting the Bhai.

What followed next forms one of the most exciting phases of Maharaj Singh's revolutionary career in which he gave an excellent account of superb military generalship and knowledge of tactical warfare. His first attempt was to avoid clash with the government troops. He, therefore, began to play the

[1] Lahore Political Diaries, Vol, IV, p. 185.
[2] Lahore Political Diaries, Vol. IV, p. 387.

game of hide and seek. On 14 *Jeth* 1905 B.E. (May-June 1848) almost within a week of the hot pursuit, he was reported to have escaped to Kot Pannah on his way to Wazirabad. The Resident at once issued orders to Kahan Singh Majithia the Jagirdar of the area and all Kardars *en route* to Wazirabad to capture the Bhai. Instructions were also issued that in case any zamindar gave shelter to Maharaj Singh, his nose and ears should be mutilated by way of punishment. Inspite of such orders, people continued to swell the force of Maharaj Singh. One Sahib Singh resident of Soman near Surian joined the volunteer corps of Bhai Maharaj Singh on 16 *Jeth* with all his horsemen although his whole family was imprisoned in pursuance of the above order.[1] of Henry lawrence. The Resident was so much infuriated by this report that he ordered the dismissal of Lachman Singh and Tek Chand and instead appointed Mr. Cox to take charge of the operations with an additional force of two platoons, one Regiment of *Rissalah* and a Derah of *Topkhana*. In the meantime reports were also received that large quantities of gun powder was hidden around Lahore by the followers of Bhai Maharaj Singh. As a result vigorous measures were taken by the British officials for detecting the hidden war material. In one case, gun powder was actually thrown in a well to avoid detection, but it caught fire in the process resulting in the death and injury of some local residents.[2]

[1] Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, Daftar V, p. 104.

[2] Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, IV, p. 1(5.

This caused so much tension in the minds of the British officers at Lahore that one of them even went to the extent of suggesting that the entire villages of those zamindars who had supplied men and materials to Maharaj Singh should be plundered and burnt and their lands auctioned. The proposal had to be shelved as it brought a strong protest from Dewan Deena Nath.

Very soon, even Captain Cox had to admit the superior military genius of Maharaj Singh. In a bid to swoop over the rebel force marching to Multan, Cox had left most of his heavy baggage at Jandiala Sher Khan and hurried with one platoon, a Regiment and a strong detachment of 400 English soldiers. The Bhai was so nicely served by his own intelligence that no sooner, Cox took this step, the Bhai too left his heavy baggage at Khankah Dogran and escaped. As soon as this was reported to the Resident, orders were issued to the troops to encircle Maharaj Singh from all sides and the Khybree troops stationed at Sayed Nagar and Kamalia were asked to join the operations launched by Cox. Thus hemmed in from the various sides, Maharaj Singh was even reported to have been captured by some tribal horsemen of Tak, but he managed to escape from their custody, before the main British force could reach the place.[1] Cox now planned another strategy. He was reported that Maharaj Singh would soon reach Jhang. He, therefore, deputed Baba Mali Singh with 200 Rohilla horsemen and

[1] Ibid, pp. 105-06.

foot soldiers with instructions to wait in ambush at a distance of about 2 miles from Jhang. Maharaj Singh seemed to have been made aware of this tactic as well, with the result, that instead of going straight to Jhang, he moved towards Shorekot from where the reached Jhang on 26 *Jeth* before noon.

As soon as he entered the town, all the businesmen appeared before him with *nazarna* and requested him to take shelter in the Jhang fort. They also offered to contribute a huge sum of Rs. 25,000 for war material.[1] Maharaj Sing, however, did not stay at Jhang as his aim was to reach Multan. He, therefore, hastened to the ferry of Baghan. When the Kardar of Chaniot informed Baba Mali Singh about the flight of Maharaj Singh towards the ferry, the Baba rushed to Bhagan with a small detachment of about 200 tribal soldiers who arrived at the ferry. just at the time when Maharaj Singh and his noble volunteers were attempting to cross. Here a skirmish took place between the two armies as a result of which 17 soldiers of the Durbar force died and their leader Mali Singh received a gun shot in his ankle. On the side of Maharaj Singh many volunteers got drowned in the river, but the guru managed to cross with a picked force although he was obliged to abandon a large number of horses, mules and camel along with the baggage they were carrying. Believing that Maharaj Singh was also drowned while crossing, Captain Cox rushed to Lahore to report the incident personally to the Resident, leaving

[1] Ibid.

Nihal Singh Chattawala and Fateh Khan to continue pursuing the rebels who had escaped. On his way to Lahore Captain Cox burnt several villages on the pretext that their inhabitants did not assist him in his operations against the rebels.

The Resident received the above news with the greatest satisfaction and delight and quite in keeping with his policy of encouraging tribals against the Sikh rebels, ordered that the entire booty looted at Bhagan be given to the Khans of Tak. He also ordered immediate payment of salaries due to the soldiers of the Durbar who had died fighting at Bhagan and proper compensation to those who were wounded.[1]

This gave the British authorities so much relief that on 3 July 1848 the Governor General in Council conveyed the good news to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, with the following remarks : "The destruction of the outlaw Gooroo Bhai Maharaj and the utter discomfiture of his followers is an event which has greatly tended to support the British authority and which must have the effect of disheartening the rebels.[2]

Reporting on this event Edwin Arnold writes "The outbreak of Mooltan raised him (Maharaj Singh) from an outlaw to a leader, for he suddenly appeared at the head of large armed parties and possessing command of sums of money sufficient for

[1] Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, Vol. IV, p. 109.

[2] Secret Despatch to Secy. of State, 3 July 1848, No. 57, para 1.

lavish distribution to the poor and to those who came for service. The money and the arms were supplied by Mool Raj, in whose interest the Guru now openly acted. Whole villages came out to meet him and subscribed to feed his recruits with sweetmeats and fruit, and the officers of the Durbar, charged to intercept him, took special pains to give him notice of their neighbourhood." Was in view of the implied understading between Maharaj Singh and the majority of the Hindus and Sikhs of the Punjab, the British authorities ultimately decided to take the help of Mussalmans for capturing him. Edwin writes about the new strategy as follows, "Bhai Maharaj Singh, the Guru, with his black mare and camp of beggars, grew at least to be too dangerous and a judicious plan was arranged by the Resident for driving him upon the Chenab, where the Mussalman villagers were grateful to us for a generous revenue settlement and entertained no respect whatever for the Guru's creed or politics The plan succeeded, and the Bhai was forced into the Chenab, by a Mussalman attack, hundreds of his men being drowned in the swollen river." According to him, the report that the Bhai was drowned in the river was testified by the Muslims who had seen the Guru loose the tail of his black mare in Chenab, and go down in the cold snow-waters, cursing the Islamites who had driven him there."[1]

However, very soon British satisfaction was

[1] Marquis of Dalhousie's Administration of British India by Edwin Arnold, Vol. 1, pp. 97-98.

converted into their own discomfiture when fresh news reached Lahore that Maharaj Singh had actually reached Multan. According to the testimony of his followers Maharaj Singh with nearly 900 volunteers was duly received by Dewan Mul Raj in the Hazoori Bagh with an offering of 40 gold *ducats*.[1] The above news was more than a bomb-shell for the Resident who began to fear that the escape of Maharaj Singh would encourage many other disaffected Chiefs to join the rebellion. To counteract this possibility he announced that if any one attempted to join Mul Raj, his house should be set on fire and his family put in prison. However to entice the wavering minds to the British cause, the Resident also declared that all those who would render help against Mul Raj would be amply rewarded with robes of honour, high posts etc.[2]

Commenting on the failure of the British to apprehend Maharaj Singh in time, Capt. Abbott wrote on 9 June 1848 "In February last I strongly urged to the officiating Resident the importance of this man's immediate siezer; what was easy then has proved impossible since the revolt of Mooltan and the escape of this robber, whom, the army are anxious to canonise, will, I fear strengthen the cause of insurgents."[3]

According to one account Maharaj Singh did not stay at Multan beyond more than 7 or 8 days as

[1] Secret Consultation, 31 January 1850, No 21.
[2] Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, Daftar IV, p. 110.
[3] Lahore Political Diaries, Vol. III, p.

differences soon appeared between him and Mul Raj mainly on the ground that the salary offered to the volunteers was not high enough. According to the testimony of his close followers, Maharaj Singh even prophesied before leaving Multan, "that the place would soon fall."[1]

[1] Secret Consultation, 31 Jan. 1851, No. 21.

V

TO THE AID OF THE ATTARIWALAS

Simultaneously with Mul Raj, the Rajput Rajas of Jaswan and Katlehr in Kangra, Baba Bikram Singh of Una in Hoshiarpur, Sodhi Ladha Singh of Kartarpur, Ram Singh of Nurpur, Lal Singh Moraria and Arjan Singh of Ranghar Nangal rebelled against the British. Bhai Maharaj Singh played an important role in organising all these uprisings.

How Maharani Jindan and Bhai Maharaj Singh were working in complete liaison for creating widespread dissentions against the British became known by the confession made by Ram Singh Wazir of Nurpur State after his arrest in 1849. He said that in early 1848 Maharani Jindan had sent him a secret message advising him to join Bhai Maharaj Singh and to act according to his orders. As Bhai Maharaj Singh was then proceeding to Multan, Ram Singh could contact him as far away as Jhung. Maharaj Singh thereupon gave him sufficient funds and advised him to return to the hills and organise a revolt there.[1] Likewise as a result of constant propaganda by Bhai Maharaj Singh the peasantry of the Punjab were already awaiting for an opportunity to measure swords with the British. What

[1] Foreign-Political Consultations dated 20 October, 1849, Nos. 110-18.

was wanted was a strong leader. Unfortunately Mul Raj who was the first to give a clarion call to the Punjabees to rebel against. the British chould not play that role, because of two reasons. Firstly, Multan was too far away from the Punjab proper and secondly, to the majority of the Punjabees Mul Raj was no more than a provincial governor of the Lahore Durbar. Even Bhai Maharaj Singh seemed to have realised after joining Mul Raj that in case he got himself involved with the British in Multan he won't be able to draw upon the active support of the Sikh masses of the Punjab which was absolutely necessary for any decisive action against the foreigners. Maharaj Singh therefore started looking for a strong Sikh Chief to lead the struggle. Fortunately for him, circumstances soon compelled the Attariwala Sardars to come out against the British.

The Attariwala Chiefs had come into prominence as a result of the part played by Sham Singh in building the Sikh empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In return the Maharaja had appropriately given Sham Singh a very high position in the official hierarchy. In 1837 the status of the Attariwalas rose sky high in the eyes of the nation as a result of the marriage between Sham Singh's daughter Nankī with Prince Naunihal Singh, the promising grandson of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This alliance was considered as of great political significance in view of the fact that Prince Naunihal Singh's succession to the throne was only a matter of time. His father Kanwar Kharak Singh the eldest son of the Maharaja was a sickly fellow and his early end was doubted by

none. The Maharaja himself had high hopes in Naunihal Singh and as such he had celebrated his marriage with a pomp rarely exhibited in the marriage of any other scion of the Lahore Royal family. Unfortunately for the people of the Punjab, Prince Naunihal Singh died in an accident in November 1840, a day after the demise of his father, Kharak Singh. Inspite of this shattering blow, Sham Singh remained as ever loyal to the interests of the Lahore Durbar and was perhaps the only Chief of status and importance who stood by his salt during the first Anglo-Sikh war of 1845-46. He died fighting against the British in the battle of Sobraon. R. Bosworth Smith pays Sham Singh the highest tribute for his steadfastness by recording in his book "Sham Singh, among the faithless, faihful only found."

After the death of Sham Singh, the leadership of the family fell on his brother Chattar Singh who had not so far played any significant role in the politics of the kingdom. The elderly Sardar was an introvert by nature. However, his eldest son Sher Singh being an astoute politician, soon won the confidence of Maharani Jindan with the result that in 1843 the dowager queen had agreed to the betrothal of Maharaja Dalip Singh with Tej Kaur daughter of Chattar Singh. After the defeat of the Lahore Durbar in 1846, Sher Singh also managed to win the confidence of the British and started riding on two horses. Anyway, Chattar Singh's family profited by this and soon the old Chief and his sons got high offices in the new set up. Chattar Singh was made

the Governor of Hazara; Sher Singh got the title of 'Raja' and made a member of the Council of Regency, while his other brother Gulab Singh was appointed guardian of the young Maharaja. In his letter dated 19 August 1848 to the Foreign Secretary Henry Elliot, Fredrick Currie then Resident at Lahore gave the following account of Chattar Singh's family. "Chattar Singh was descended from the Junior branch of the House of the Chiefs of Attari. During the reign of Ranjit Singh, the Sardar and his sons took no prominent part in the politics of the Lahore Durbar. The present position of the family was due to the nearness of their relation with Maharaja Dalip Singh and the goodwill of Henry Lawrence."

It is, however, very difficult to say as to what part Bhai Maharaj Singh had played in winning over the Attariwala Chiefs to his cause. But it cannot be denied that when he returned from Multan sometimes in June 1848, he was well aware of the fact that Chattar Singh was having a very bad time with his British Assistant Major James Abbott. He was also aware that the Attariwalas were not happy over the postponement by the British of the nuptial ceremony of Tej Kaur with the young Maharaja. Maharaj Singh's mind was, therefore, very clear about the next step. He at once proceeded to contact Chattar Singh at Hazara. This time he followed a very circuitous route. Starting from Multan via Pakpattan, Muktsar, Anandpur and Jawala Mukhi and then proceeding along the foot of the Shiwalak

hills, Maharaj Singh reached Rawalpindi well before Chattar Singh had started his military operations. As far as the defection of Raja Sher Singh from the British was concerned it was mainly due to the repeated letters his father wrote to him from Hazara. But according to Arnold Edwin Sher Singh had confessed after his arrest that he was also influenced by Bhai Maharaj Singh in taking that fateful decision. Whether Chattar Singh and particularly Sher Singh were really made of the chips the true freedom fighters should be, was yet to be proved, but the fact that Maharaj Singh had been able to win over the most powerful Sikh chiefs in the Punjab gave to the struggle the much needed boost it required.

The next task of Bhai Maharaj Singh was to strengthen the hands of the Attariwalas by recruiting more and more volunteers. Maharaj Singh had no difficulty in doing this too. He was as much revered in the North-West as in Central Punjab. As soon as people came to know about the presence of Maharaj Singh in Rawalpindi, they flocked to him in large numbers and offered their services. The guru then made a hasty tour of the nearby villages of Banda, Sukho, Dhartala, Saido and Chakwal to appeal the local Sikh population to rise to the occasion.

While Maharaj Singh was thus busy strengthen-the hands of Chattar Singh, news came that Raja Sher Singh had defected the British and joined Mul Raj. Thereafter Raja Sher Singh's real worry was as to whether he should pin his soldiers in Multan

or go to the rescue of his father. At this moment Major Edwards played a very clever ruse. He wrote a letter to the address of Raja Sher Singh praising him for laying a trap against Dewan Mul Raj and made this letter fall into the hands of the Dewan. This made Mul Raj feel suspicious about the intentions of Raja Sher Singh and accordingly he refused to allow the latter to enter the fort. As a result of this episode Sher Singh left Multan on 9 October 1848 with the intention of liberating Lahore from the British. He could not, however, realise his aim because by that time Lord Gough, the British Commander-in-Chief, had already crossed the Sutlej with a large force and heavy seize guns. Sher Singh then moved to join his father who had by then already fought a few skirmishes with the British in the North-West. Sher Singh's march to that side was mostly uneventful till he reached the river Chenab in the last week of November 1848.

By this time Maharaj Singh had already completed his tour of the area and from the response he received from all the Sikh and Hindu residents, he was quite sure of giving a tough fight to the British. To all the volunteers who offered to join him in the battles Maharaj Singh gave turbans by way of his blessings. According to Sohan Lal Suri, author of Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, the guru joined Sher Singh near Ram Nagar on 3rd *magher.* The arrival of Maharaj Singh with large number of volunteers so much enthused the spirits of Raja Sher Singh that he announced this event by firing a volley from his cannon. The Bhai, thereafter, held prayers for the

success of the freedom struggle and distributed *Prashad* among all the soldiers. Mahant Baba Ram Singh in his book "Hirian de Har", mentions that on the eve of the battle of Ramnagar Bhai Maharaj Singh had spent rupees 50,000 on *Prashad* only. In all the campaigns fought against the British thereafter, Bhai Maharaj Singh could always be seen in the front columns riding his black mare and exhorting the faithful to lay down their lives for the honour of their homeland and religion. This had its immediate impact on the fortunes of the war. At Ram Nagar the Punjabi Cavalry with the support of their Artillery, not only foiled General Campbell's attack, but also captured one of his guns and the Colours of a British regiment by forcing their way across the river. The British also lost three senior officers ; Lt. Colonel Havelock, Brigadier General Crueton and Captain Fitzgerald. According to Professor Sita Ram Kohli "Ramnagar was not an engagement of any great consequence but it gave a much needed booster to Punjabi morale." While reporting on the campaign, the British Subaltern wrote, "The enemy are in great feather, and ride along within half a mile of our camp and close to pickets." This was all due to the presence of Bhai Maharaj Singh in the foremost columns of the rebel soldiers.

The victory at Ram Nagar also gave Raja Sher Singh the confidence he needed, and he sent a note

[1] Sunset of the Sikh Empire ; edited by S. Khushwant Singh.

promised to get out of Lahore."

The British instead of coming to terms with Sher Singh decided to weaken his fortitude by encouraging dissensions in his camp as they did at Multan. The result was that by the time a decisive action was fought at Chillianwala on 13 January 1849, they had already on their side Colonel Steinbach with his loyal dogras and the strong contingent of Muslim Rohillas, both having been induced to desert the freedom fighters.

In spite of the demoralising effect of the above desertions and the difficult situation of supplies on their side, the brave Khalsa soldiers again created history on the field of Chillianwala. Professor Sita Ram Kohli gives the following account of the action :

> "At noon on 13 January 1849, the Punjabis sighted the British advancing towards them from the direction of the village, Chillianwala. General Elahi Baksh's Artillery brought the enemy's advance to a stand still. For one hour Punjabi guns kept the British at a distance. When their fire slackened, the British, who had the advantage in numbers, charged in attempt to force the Punjabis into the river. The assault was led by Brigadier Pennycuick. The Khalsa found the conditions to their liking. They scattered into the brushwood jungle and began their harrying *dhai-phut* (hit and run) tactics. Their snipers took heavy toll of British infantry and cavalry. Those that got through the brushwood and

ravines were easily repulsed in the hand to hand fight with the main line of the Punjabi troops. Pennycuick, his son and hundreds of the enemy were killed in most savage fighting between the Punjabis and the British. the bloody battle lasted till darkness fell. The Punjabis captured four British guns and the colours of three regiments. The night was one of great terror for the British."

The same has been authentically reported by the British Sublatern in these words:

> "The Sikhs fought like devils......such a mass of men I never set eye on and as brave as lions: they ran right on the bayonets of the 24th (Regiment) and struck at their assailants when they were transfixed."

General Thackwell who also participated in these battles paints even more gloomy picture of the losses suffered by the British on that day. He writes :

> "...confusion pervaded the whole army. Fears were generally entertained that the enemy (the Punjabis) would attempt a night attack. If they had been enterprising and could have perceived the extent of their advantage they would assuredly have thrown themselves on us...the jungle which had befriended them in the commencement of the action now formed a protection to us." "Prince Albert hats and military shoes might be seen in all directions strewn on the ground in great abundance...the camp next day was overspread with funeral gloom."

Professor Kohli concludes by saying, "Chillianwala was the worst defeat the British had suffered since their occupation of India. Gough was superseded and Napier was asked to come from England to take over command."[1]

Sher Singh Attariwala's guns boomed a twenty-one gun salute to the Punjabi victory. The Raja again sent a proposal to the British to reinstate Maharaja Dalip Singh and evacuate from Lahore.[2]

Took charge of maintaining supplies

Another difficulty felt during the above battles was the shortage of food and fodder for the men and animals engaged in these operations. Bhai Maharaj Singh also took this arduous task upon himself. For this purpose he opened a number of supply centres and appointed his trusted followers Mitha Singh, Jawahar Singh and Gurmukh Singh of Malwa as incharge of the Commissariat. Two of these supply centres were in Pasrur in Sialkot now in West Pakistan and Majore in Jammu from where large caravans of camels continued moving carrying essential supplies. It is believed that the functioning of these supply missions in the State of Jammu and Kashmir was mainly due to the goodwill of Prince Ranbir Singh then Governor of Jammu. He had instructed all local officials to allow the agents of Maharaj Singh to make purchases of grains, fodder and wood etc. from the various parts of the province without any interference from their side. It was only

[1] Sunset of the Sikh Empire, pp. 174-75.

[2] Ibid, p. 177.

after the defeat of the Attariwalas at the battle of Gujrat that Mian Ranbir Singh had asked Bhai Maharaj Singh to withdraw his supply missions from Jammu, probably under secret instructions from his father, Maharaja Gulab Singh.[1]

After their defeat at Gujrat the Attariwala Chiefs along with Bhai Maharaj Singh and Baba Bikram Singh escaped to Rawalpindi. They had still with them a large force numbering nearly 16,000 men and 40 guns. They were being hotly pursued by General Gilbert with a force of nearly 15,000 men and 30 guns. It is said that inspite of the advice of Bhai Maharaj Singh to fight at least one more action either at Rawalpindi or Hassan Abdal, Raja Sher Singh lost heart and surrendered his troops and magazine on 14 March 1849 to General Gilbert at Rawalpindi. How sorry the rebel soldiers felt at this abject surrender is proved by the following report about their disarming. "The men sad and downcast, but with a soldier-like sternness of feeling, cast their swords into the heap, as they passed and slammed to the spirit of the steel."[2]

None could be sadder than Bhai Maharaj Singh who had put so high hopes in the leadership of the Attariwala Chiefs. But the main question then before him was about the future course of action. Any other person in his place, would have given up the task in sheer disgust. Maharaj Singh was, however, not made of that mould. He decided to carry the struggle to its bitter end even if he were to fight alone.

[8] Secret Consultation, 31 Jan. 1850, Nos. 20-31.

[2] Calcutta Review, September 1849.

VI

RESOLVE TO FIGHT ALONE

To be able to pursue the struggle on his own, Maharaj Singh's first task was to avoid being captured by the British. Thinking that the British held Punjab was no more safe even for his secret activities, he escaped into Jammu with a few of his very trusted followers. Others were advised to disperse and remain underground in the Punjab pending further instructions. Maharaj Singh first proceeded to Bhimber and from there went to Akhnur, but considering both these places as unsafe he soon reached Devi Battala, a place about 35 miles in the interior of Jummu. Surrounded by thick jungles and deep ravines Devi Battala ensured greater safety for the freedom fighters. Within a few days of his arrival there many of his followers joined him and plans were set afoot for the renewal of the struggle. Fortunately the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir did not raise any obstructions as according to the testimony of the close followers of Maharaj Singh, Maharaja Gulab Singh was aware of their presence in his territories.

As soon as the news spread about the presence of Maharaj Singh in the area hundreds of local people began to visit him every day to seek his blessings. Several of his other followers from the Punjab also joined him there, but Maharaj Singh sent them back

with instructions to establish contacts with like-minded people in various regions and to gauge their feelings about the future course of anti-British activities while he himself moved to Chumbi a place further to the interior. It was at Chumbi that Maharaj Singh began to give final shape to his future programme of action, with the help of his close advisers namely Hari Singh, Dal Singh, Jawala Singh, Mehar Singh, Kahan Singh, Kharak Singh, Gurmukh Singh and Nanoo Singh.[1] But the uppermost problem was of securing finances which the Bhai was then badly lacking. This led him to commit a tactical blunder. Close to Chumbi was the fort of Ramnagar belonging to the widow of late Raja Suchet Singh, brother of Maharaja Gulab Singh. May be for the purpose of obtaining some money or for using it as a stronghold for future operations, Maharaj Singh decided to capture this fort at the instigation of one Ram Dass an official of the Dogras. Ram Dass had met Maharaj Singh at Jammu where the latter had paid a short visit along with Kahan Singh. To achieve this object Maharaj Singh deputed nearly 400 of his followers under the command of Sardar Jawahar Singh of Sarhali. The Dogras certainly disliked this move and Prince Ranbir Singh accordingly took prompt steps to counter this plan. He seized Ram Dass along with many volunteers of the Bhai. Although the Sikh volunteers were released later on but their camels were confiscated and Maharaj Singh was ordered to leave the State on the pain of

1. Secret Consultation, 31 Jan., 1851, No. 21.

being imprisoned. As a result of this episode the Bhai was obliged to leave the territories of Maharaja Gulab Singh and take shelter at Sujowal near Battala in the Punjab. He shifted to this place sometime in July/August 1849[2], and took up his headquarters in a garden outside the town known as the Dam Damah of Bhai Bir Singh his guru. Among those who joined him at Sujowal were Mohra from Wazirabad, who was outlawed after his brother Prema the leader of the first conspiracy was captured in 1847. Piar Singh was the other influential person who met him there.

Plan to secure the person of Maharaja Dalip Singh

Piar Singh invited Maharaj Singh to Jusrota his native place assuring that all the country of "Chiba Bahoo" as that region was popularly known, was at his back. On the other hand, Mohra and one Kandah Singh were of opinion that as a first step, they should release Maharaja Dalip Singh from the custody of the British before he was removed from the Punjab. This later course was accepted by the Bhai so that with Maharaja Dalip Singh in their custody the struggle for freedom could be conducted in his name.[2]

As a result of this decision Maharaj Singh deputed nearly 20 men of approved courage to Lahore including ex-Commandant Prem Singh, Ram Singh of Rawal, Butta Singh and Jawahar Singh of Sarhali,

1. Ibid, Nos. 23 and 25.
2. Ibid, No. 21.

Mehtab Singh of Naushehra near Battala and Bhup Singh and Dal Singh. At Lahore, one Mian Ganeshi who was in the confidence of Mohra, was to assist the party in getting entry into the Palace. Unfortunately, the British got a clue of this plan and arrangements were made to arrest the rebels. This was really a very crucial period as Henry Lawrence later on recorded, "The minds of men", he wrote, "were much excited, the Maharaja was about to leave Lahore in exile ; the leaders in the late war who had been arrested were about to follow. Bhai Maharaj Singh a sikh priest of reputed sanctity and of great influence, the first man who raised the standard of rebellion beyond the confines of Multan in 1848, and the only leader of note who did not lay down his arms to Sir Walter Gilbert, at Rawal Pindee was tempering with the Seikhs of the Punjab Cavalry Corps at Lahore. Six of his emissaries watched by the police had been for weeks and were at that very time, residing close under the Palace walls, with a view to abducting the young Maharaja."[1] Actually the main burden of Maharaj Singh's mind seems to be to benefit by this tense political situation and raise the rebellion before the British could actually remove from the Punjab all those chiefs who had led the late revolt against the British. Moreover his success in establishing secret liaison with the state prisoners particularly Dewan Hakim Rai, Lal Singh Moraria and others suggests the probability that similar attempt could be made to rescue them also from British captivity.

1. Calcutta Review, Vol. XXII, 1854.

Collection of men and war material

After deputing his volunteers to Lahore, Maharaj Singh himself set out to make arrangements for the general rebellion. As men and money were very essential for this purpose he deputed his followers in batches to all parts of the Punjab and the North West as far as Kabul and Kandhar for recruiting volunteers and raising funds. They were specially instructed to make use of the local influence of Sikh priests in all those regions.

In accordance with this scheme, Basawa Singh of Nurpur Chopra, Bagh Singh, Alam Singh and Piara Singh were sent with letters to Bhais Kishan Singh and Nihal Singh who had large number of followers in Kabul and Kandhar. They also carried letters to Sultan Mohammad Khan the brother of Dost Mohammad Khan Amir of Kabul and other Pathan chiefs in the North-West asking for help. Kheran Singh another very trusted follower was sent to seek the support of Bhai Dewan Singh an influential priest in Jind.[1] Among other batches Bhup Singh, Dal Singh, Jhanda Singh and Jawala Singh were sent to the Manjah region ; Alla Singh Rarewala, Mana Singh and Mitha Singh were sent to Anandpur; Hari Singh to Ambala; Narain Singh, Bahadur Singh and Gurmukh Singh to Doaba and Dharam Singh, Nihal Singh and Kahan Singh Bhikhivindia to Lahore.[2]

The following two letters from Bhai Maharaj

1. Secret Consultation, 31 Jan., 1851, No. 25.
2. Secret Consultations, 31 May 1850, Nos. 20-31.

Singh to Kishen Singh and Nihal Singh provide a very clear picture of what Maharaj Singh was expecting from them.

"After compliments. The orders of the Gooroo, protector of the poor, Seree Maharaj to Kishen Singh our son the illumined. If the 500 young men are ready, let leaders trustworthy be appointed to every 100, and let all these be brought before Prem Singh. Where the other Singh's are ? Let them all be ready for their religion. This is an order of greatest importance. Be not negligent, and understand that little writing is equal to much writing. Let the pass word be, that Kishen Singh is equal to Maharaj."*

"After compliments & c. & ca. There is one God and he is the Ally of the Gooroo. This is the order to the Khalsa. You all shall obey Bhai Kishen Singh. Peara Singh goes to you. Whatever he shall say know to be true. You must send your men to me for your circumstances are not sufficiently known to me."*

In reply Nihal Singh gave Bagh Singh a *Khillaut* and some fruits as an offering to Maharaj Singh with the message that : "whatever Maharaj will order I will carry out."*

Underground tour of Maharaj Singh

After sending his envoys to various directions, Maharaj Singh himself proceeded on a secret tour of some important places in Hoshiarpur, Jullundur, Kapurthala and Amritsar in connection with the

* This is a loose translation of the letters written by the Bhai as available in the original documents.

proposed attack on the British Cantonments.

From Sujowal he went to Guleran, and then crossing the river Beas at Rai Ka Pattan reached Kishupur in Hoshiarpur district where he met many influential persons including ex-Major Mangal Singh of Hajipur. From Kishupur, the Bhai moved to Datarpur where he contacted among others Attra and the ex-Wazir Achchar Singh, Mustagir Gusain and his disciples, and Gurditta and Bhupa *qanungos* of village Gurh. The Rajputs of the place assured the Bhai that they could collect five to ten thousand matchlocks in the hills and would cooperate in the sack of Hajipur and Hoshiarpur. Mustagir Gusain told him, "I will collect 1000 Sanyasis who are daring and wealthy." Bhupa and Gurditta also assured help saying that during the late rebellion by the Chiefs of Jaswan and Kangra their families were ruined by the *malechchas* (the British). At Kurala where he was visited by many local zamindars and other influential people of the area, Maharaj Singh asked all of them to be ready for a rebellion. In response to this appeal they agreed to arrange for 100 matchlocks. It was here that Bhag Singh, earlier deputed to the North Western frontier, brought letters from Sultan Mohammad Khan and many other Pathan chiefs.

Failure to abduct the Maharaja

While Maharaj Singh was thus going ahead with the preparations for a general rebellion, he received the sad news that the plan to abduct Maharaja Dalip Singh had failed and that most of the volun-

teers sent to Lahore for the purpose were arrested. According to Mr Vansittart, Deputy Commissioner Jullundur, the above plot had failed because, in the first instance, the execution of the plan by the conspirators was delayed for various reasons and secondly that the persons attending on the young Maharaja did not lend their support for the purpose However Maharaj Singh was not deterred by this failure and continued his tour.

Attack on Cantonments and Treasuries Planned

From Kurala, Maharaj Singh moved to Hoshiarpur via Birampur sometime in the beginning of December 1849. Maharaj Singh's purpose in going to Hoshiapur was two-fold, firstly, to win over the Sikh regiments posted there and secondly to finalize arrangements for looting the supposed Government treasury at Bujwara. Maharaj Singh was accompanied there by his trusted followers Gurmukh Singh Langri, Bahadur Singh, Dharam Singh, Ishar Singh and Kharak Singh. Here he mainly moved about during the night, contacting the local influential persons and the officers of the Sikh regiments.

Among the military officers who assured him help were Subedars Prem Singh, Suba Singh, Jai Singh, Havildar Bhag Singh and many others. Besides the Sikh military officers, Maharaj Singh met many local zamindars including Colonel Budh Singh and his brother and Bhai Lehna Singh. He appealed to them to join him for attacking the British

Cantonment. Ishar Singh one of his close followers, also brought Kirpa Ram an influential sadhu of Kummuwal in the neighbourhood. Kirpa Ram assured the guru that he could raise 4,000 men at a short notice as he had large number of followers not only in Datarpur, but also in the Chach Doab and Hazara. Therefore on leaving Hoshiarpur Maharaj Singh accompanied Kirpa Ram to Kummuwal staying on the way for one night at the village of Bohan Patti. From hence the party proceeded to Kandolai, Barian, Mahipatti and Harta Badla. Kandola was important for the fact that many of the guru's followers namely Gurmukh Singh *langri* and Havildar Jai Singh of the 1st Sikh Light Infantry belonged to this village, besides Baisakha *chummar* who had already played an important role in the insurrection of Bikram Singh Bedi. Maharaj Singh stopped for two days at Kandola, when numerous zamindars from this and the adjoining villages were brought before him He told them that all true Sikhs should be ready to join the revolt in the near future. Maharaj Singh received more encouraging response from the people of this area as at no time, less than 100 to 150 Sikhs visited him with "a degree of openness and publicity" reported Mr. Macleod, the Commissioner.[1] From Kandola, Maharaj Singh moved to Sham Churasi, stopping on the way at the village of Chandi where some Jagirdars from the village of Hargarh called upon him.

1. Secret Consultations, 31 Jan., 1851, No. 22.

Announcement of 'D' Day

The party arrived at Sham Churasi on the night of 3rd or 4th December and stayed at the dharamsala of Puran Das *sadhu*. According to Mr. Macleod, "Although the village belongs to and is chiefly inhabited by Mohammedan Rajpoots, yet by far the most important assemblage or Council held in in Doab, took place here." Mr. Macleod was, however, of the opinion that the guru, originally intended to hold this Council at Kandola, but that some unexpected circumstances occurred which led him to deem it prudent to transfer it hither." One of these reasons was that many of the guru's principal followers who had earlier gone to different places for canvassing support, could not join him at Kandola as per previous understanding, but joined him at Sham Churasi. Among these were Basawa Singh and Jawahar Singh who had brought many assurances from the North-West probably including the following letters from Dost Mohammad Amir of Kabul :

After Compliments to Maharaj Singh.

"We remain stranger than ever on the road of friendship and alliance. The last letter of your several letters filled with friendship and written in alliance has been read by us, and we have learnt what are the circumstances under which you write. You too know our state that Rajah Goolab Singh, although he had large treasure, wealth, and power at first persuaded and enticed the Sirdars of greatest note Chuttur Singh Bahadur, and Rajah Shere Singh Bahadur, and other Sirdars of the Seikh Khalsa

into hostilities with the English Government, and assured you that with his wealth, his army, alliance-sic, and in his own person, and with his people, he would assist you as an ally. But in the end he did nothing. Both in the estimation of the Seikh nation and in that of the English he has carried a bad name. The Seikhs too lost from want of funds for support of their army. And we the race of Afghans, were enticed too by the hope of that wealth. But that which was the will of God has been done. Now we the Nation are in our own country of Hills, from Herat, to Candhar, and from Caubul to the Khybur the boundary of Peshawur, in full strength, and numbers. Whenever any one shall have any design on this country by the assistance of the Omnipotent our endeavours shall be to repulse them. Altho' in accordance with the desire of Maharaj Jee, we wish once more to assemble our army and to march for the Punjab, and once more fight the English, but without wealth, and treasury, it is difficult.

You yourself (understand me) are far sighted, this is the truth which we have written at Caubul on the 24th Zikad." [1st November 1849].

In spite of the fact that the above communication was very discouraging, Maharaj Singh did not think it proper to postpone the decision of general insurrection. He therefore called for the Granth Sahib and after consulting the holy book announced that 20th *Posh* was most propitious for attacking the Cantonments of Hoshiarpur and Jullundur. After announcing this decision, Maharaj Singh had

a quick round of some nearby places in the Jullundur district mainly for the collection of arms and stores for his volunteers. He first went to Tanda to collect small arms and a cannon. The next place visited was Zahura where by previous arrangement many of his followers from Manjah and Malwa regions of the Punjab met him. Also two Jat Artillery men from Kapurthala were introduced to the guru by Dharam Singh. At Zahura the guru remained busy for the whole night consulting and perfecting arrangements. He left this place early morning for a trip to the Bari Doab, crossing the river at Sri Gobindpur Ghat. His itinerary in the Bari Doab included among others, a visit to Amritsar. Whether he could actually fulfil that desire is not known, but on his way he did visit the villages of Kureshian and Gaggar Bhana. From Gaggar Bhana the guru returned to Kandola, crossing the river at the Wazir Ghat and making a short stay at the village of Dhaliwal in the Kapurthala State. Unfortunately when all the arrangements for attacking the two Contonments were nearly completed Maharaj Singh was arrested on the information of a Muslim informer.

VII

ARREST AND BANISHMENT

The man who had remained a great enigma for the British authorities eversince he had gone underground three years back was at last apprehended while he was busy giving final touches to his plan of attacking the British Treasuries and Cantonments. Rumour had got afoot that an attempt would also be made to kidnap and kill Henry Vansittart the Deputy Commissioner of Jullundur. Believing this rumour worthy of cognizance Vansittart decided to foil this plan. He posted a few muslims in the British intelligence service to track down Maharaj Singh. The plan worked and on the evening of 28 December 1849, one of these informers reached his bungalow almost out of breath to convey the happy news that Maharaj Singh with a party numbering between twenty to thirty followers was hiding for the night in the fields between Adampur and Sham about 14 miles from Jullundur. Vansittart acted promptly. As he reported to his superiors next day morning, he along with the Kotwal, the informer and about 20 horsemen were already on the march within 8 minutes of the receipt of the above information. It was a moonlit night and the party galloped as fast as they could, with the result that by the time it reached Adampur they were only 11 including the Deputy Commissioner, the Risaldar of

the contingent and the informer. The remaining horsemen were straggling far behind. As there was hardly any time to loose, the Deputy Commissioner decided to take the risk even with that small force. Breathing their horses for only two minutes the party set off across the open fields to the directions given by the informer. Being sure that Maharaj Singh and his party would be armed with lethal weapons, Mr. Vansittart ordered that only four horsemen should surround the area making as much noise as they could, while he, the Risaldar, the Kotwal and others would ride down such of the gang as might break cover. Luckily for him, the attempt bore fruit within minutes as they saw six men running out of the fields. They were soon overtaken after a minor encounter in which one Amir Singh Akali got killed with the pistol shot fired by Mr. Vansittart. In the meantime the Risaldar dismounted his horse and within minutes seized and bound a party of twenty one freedom fighters including Maharaj Singh. Most unexpectedly none of them had any arms.

The first thing to be done by the authorities thereafter was to establish the identity of Maharaj Singh. The Board of Administration at Lahore as well as the Governor General were very particular about this step because during the last three years every time they thought they had apprehended or killed Maharaj Singh, they found themselves sadly mistaken. This was not an easy task as none of the British Officers had personally seen him. In view of this both Vansittart and Donald F. Macleod then

Commissinor of Jullundur Doab took every precaution to be sure that Maharaj Singh was among those taken into custody. Vansittart felt himself on sure ground because of the following reasons. Firstly, to his surprise the Sikh guards posted at the civil jail Jullundur reverentially bowed before Maharaj Singh as he alongwith his followers was led into the jail Secondly, within a short time of the spread of the news of the capture of Maharaj Singh thousands of Hindus and Sikhs gathered near the jail premises and it was feared that an attempt would be made by the mob to set him free. The Deputy Commissioner also informed the Commissioner, though quite presumptuously "that the act of the capture of Maharaj Singh by him, had made him unpopular with the Hindus of the city with whom he was quite popular till then." From these reports Mr. Macleod was convinced beyond doubt that their chief prisoner was none but Maharaj Singh. He accordingly informed the Board of Administration on 5 January 1850 that "there is no longer any doubt of his identity."[1]

Maharaj Singh was not put in chains in the first instance. The only precaution taken by the Deputy Commissioner in his case was that during night, "the right hand of the guru was fastened to the person of a loyal Muslim put on guard duty." However, keeping in view the grave law and order situation the Commissioner approved the proposal of the Deputy Commissioner to place him in chains, with the remarks, "that no chance should be taken

1. Secret Consultations, 23 March 1850, No. 26.

with so dangerous a prisoner as the Guru."

The Board of Administration in their letter dated 3 January 1850 not only approved these measures, but also suggested "that a double entry of men (not Seikhs) selected for their trustworthiness, but not so chosen as to evince distrust of others, may be stationed day and night, at the door of his cell, so that they may be able to see him at all hours. A patrol of Hindoostanee horse should be round the jail day and night. The Jail Guard should be increased, and if Captain Gordon distrusts his corps, an application should be made for regular troops."[1]

Before the above instructions could reach the Deputy Commissioner, the situation at Jullundur had become more grave, due to the escape from the Civil Jail of Achchar Singh the Rajput Chief who had earlier collaborated with Maharaj Singh.[2] It was also feared that an attempt might be made for rescuing the guru from the British custody. Keeping this in view Vansittart wrote to Major Palmer, incharge of the Jullundur Brigade to post Captain Augustus Turner with four European soldiers to take charge of the Civil Jail and four more European soldiers to guard the persons of the guru all the 24 hours.[3] But since the guru had not taken his meals since his arrest, it was feared that in the event of his death the Sikh guards might not remain loyal. Keeping this eventuality in view the Deputy

1. Secret Consultations, dated 25 January 1850, No. 5.
2. Secret Consultations, dated 22 March 1850, No. 32.
3. Secret Consultations, dated 22 March 1850, No. 25.

Commissioner requested Major Palmer, to lend him instead not less than eighty sepoys the same number as the Sikh guard then posted at the Civil Jail.[1] In view of this request, Brigadier General Wheeler Commander of the Cantonment, allowed Captain Turner, 2nd in Command of the 1st Sikh Light Infantry to take over from Captain Gordon the guard duty of the Civil Jail No sooner, Captain Turner, took charge of the jail, he also felt that it was not prudent to rely on the Sikh guard. Therefore he recommended the removal of the guru to the military lines. He wrote, "I do not think he is so safe from escape here as he will be in the Cantonments, and I hesitate not to say, that by keeping him here, you subject the fidelity of the Sikh Regiment, to a most bitter, and as far as I can see an undesirable test."[2] On receiving the views of Captain Turner, Vansittart lost no time in informing Major Palmer his approval of that suggestion. He said, "It was not for me, a civilian to express myself more strongly on the comparative fidelity of the soldiers of the Sikh Regiment on this particular charge than I already have done in a letter written to my official superiors. I therein stated that unless the detachment on duty in the jail were placed under the charge of an European Officer, I would remove them, and employ in their stead Musulman Burkundazes. I never would expose myself to the religious fanaticism of this sect of men, when the object in view could be obtained by other means."[2]

1. Op. cit.
2. Secret Consultations, dated 23, March 1850, No. 25.

In view of the above reports, the Commissioner and Brigadier Wheeler agreed to the removal of Maharaj Singh and his personal attendant Kharak Singh to military custody.

Writing on 2 January 1850 from his camp at Hoshiarpur, to P. Melvill, officiating Secretary to the Board of Administration, the Commissioner stated, "The Chief prisoner being evidently considered by all classes of the native population, not even excepting the greater portion of Mohamedans to be imbued with miraculous powers, rendering him an object of great reverence, and his arrest having been as manifestly distateful to the native community generally, it was considered indispensable that more than ordinary precautions should be taken for his safe custody, and as all the military authorities, including Brigadier Wheeler were of opinion that the Jail from its being overlooked by adjoining buildings of all kinds, is incapable of effective defence, in the event such becoming necessary, their removal to Cantonments was unanimously agreed on." The Commissioner in this letter however tried to allay the apprehension that any serious attempt on the part of the people to rescue the guru was possible. His arrest he stated had already, "paralysed and alarmed his other close followers." But at the same time he contented that, "it was not cousidered prudent to risk either contingency when the means of avoiding all such risk was at once available."[1]

[1] Ibid.
[2] Secret Consultations, dated 25 Jan. 1850, No. 51.

Placing of Bhai Maharaj Singh in military custody also solved another problem of the authorities that of deciding the procedure to be followed for his trial and subsequent punishment. On the day Maharaj Singh and his party were captured at Jullundur, the Board of Administration had completed all arrangements for carrying a number of other freedom fighters from Lahore to the various places of confinement in India. These included Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala and his sons Raja Sher Singh and Avtar Singh, Lal Singh Moraria, Mehtab Singh Majithia, Dewan Hakim Rai, Krishan Kaur and Arjan Singh. After their defeat and capture in March 1849, they were allowed to live in their respective villages under certain restrictions. But soon it was detected that they were in secret communication with Bhai Maharaj Singh and other elements prejudicial to the British. The authorities had, therefore, decided to confine them in far off places outside the Punjab. To these was added Dewan Mul Raj, the Ex-Governor of Multan, whom the British had condemned to death, after "a proper trial" as they said. This was later condoned to life imprisonment beyond the high seas. Therefore Mul Raj too was to leave Lahore with the other freedom fighters. The party was placed under the charge of Major General Biddulph.[1] Earlier Maharaja Dalip Singh had been sent to Fategurh about 300 miles away on the first lap of his journey to England.

The Board of Administration accordingly

[1] Secret Consultations, dated 22nd Feb. 1850, Nos. 31-36.

decided to avail of this opportunity and recommended the removel of Maharaj Singh from the Punjab without taking any risk of putting him on trial. The Governor General, Lord Dalhousie, in his usual manner felt happy over this proposal and readily endorsed it In his Minute dated 13 January 1850 the Governor General wrote, "the Board and the Commissioner have acted wisely in taking every practicable precaution, and I have no doubt successfully, for the custody of the Bhaie." As for his disposal, the Governor General continued, "I should myself have desired that so mischievous and so bold a traitor (of course to the British) should be at once brought to trial, and, if convicted, should be subjected to the heaviest penalty which public law can inflict In deference to the opinion which appears to be entertained strongly by the local authorities, I accede to the wish that has been expressed that the Bhaie should be forthwith removed from the jurisdiction of the Board, and from among his own people; with a view to avoid the excitement and prolonged uncertainty which the delay necessarily attendant on a trial would create. The Bhaie should be identified with certainty, and should then be at once removed to Allahabad. The disciple who is stated to have been taken with him should be sent with him also." The Governor General further informed the Board that Brigadier Wheeler was being ordered to take charge of the Bhai and his follower Kharak Singh from Jullundur and convey them along with other State prisoners to Allahabad, from where arrangements should be made to send him to

Calcutta [1]

According to this order Bhai Maharaj Singh and his close follower Kharak Singh were despatched from Jullundur on 30th January 1850 on the first lap of their journey to Ambala under Regulation III of the Act of 1818.[2] From Ambala, they were taken to Allahabad and from their to Calcutta. From Allahabad to Calcutta, they were accompanied by Dewan Mul Raj. The three State prisoners reached Calcutta on 19 April 1850.[3] Under the orders of the Governor General in Council, dated 23 March 1850 Mul Raj was to be detained at Calcutta because of his poor health, while Maharaj Singh and Kharak Singh were to be deported to Singapore.[4] The Government had issued elaborate instructions to Colonel Warren, Commandant of Fort William with regard to the security of Maharaj Singh and his companion while at Calcutta.[5] The British authorities were so much careful with regard to their security that during their entire journey from Jullundur to Calcutta, Maharaj Singh and his disciple were kept in fetters. They remained in irons even while lodged in the two cells of the Prince of Wales Bastion in the Fort, a place where another State prisoner Wazir Ali was once detained.[5] Colonel Warren informed the Governor General that in the

[1] Secret Consultation, dated 25 Jan. 1850, No. 53.
[2] Secret Consultation, dated 20 April 1850, Nos. 91-92
[3] Secret Consultation, dated 31 May 1850, No. 107.
[4] Secret Consultation, dated 26 April 1850, No. 99.
[5] Ibid, No. 104.
[6] Ibid, No. 101.

selection of this building, he was chiefly guided by the fact that, "it was in the immediate vicinity of an European and Native Guard which was being increased to the proportion required to furnish the extra sentries." He also informed that he would be personally visiting the State prisoners twice a day while at nights, the European Captain incharge of the main gate of the Fort would pay two to three visits alongwith a Subaltern Officer.[1]

In the meantime arrangements were completed for the deportation of the guru and his disciple to Singapore. They boarded the ship "Mohammed Shah" on 15 May 1850 with a guard of one Corporal and six Privates of H M's. 70th Regiment under one European Sergeant. According to the orders of the Governor General, Irons on the prisoners were for the first time removed after the ship had entered the high seas. The Saint of Naurangabad thus left the shores of mother India quite uncocerned about his own furture but naturally worried about the future of the Punjab for whose freedom he had staked his all.

[1] Op. cit.

VIII
MARTYRDOM IN SINGAPORE JAIL

The "Mohammed Shah" anchored at Singapore on 9 June 1850 carrying Maharaj Singh to the last lap of his life's journey. He and his faithful disciple Kharak Singh were duly received from board the ship by Mr. T. Church, Resident Councillor, Singapore, in accordance with the instructions issued on 7 May 1850 by the Government of India to the Governor of Straits Settlements, Colonel Butterworth. The above letter was accompanied by a warrant under Regulation III of 1818 duly authorizing the Governor to receive and detain the two prisoners in confinement. The letter of 7 May 1850 also contained elaborate instructions as to the place of detention of the prisoners and the precautions to be taken for ensuring their safe custody. The Governor was told that "the safe custody of the Prisoner Bhai Maharaj Singh is considered to be of great importance to the Government and that it is necessary therefore that he should be closely and carefully watched." "It will not at the same time be forgotten," the letter continued, "that he is a State prisoner, and that as such he should not be treated with any unnecessary rigor." The letter also suggested that the Governor General considered one of the rooms in the upper storey of the New Jail at Singapore as, "the most fitting place to select for the confinement

of the prisoners," and that, "it will of course be necessary, at least for some time to come, to have a special military Guard set over the prisoners,"...and that, "some trustworthy non-commissioned European Officer, or Government servant of some class, should be specially appointed for their custody." The Governor was further told that, "no one should be admitted to the apartment occupied by the prisoners except with the knowledge of this officer and he should himself see the prisoners at least twice every day. The Assistant to the Resident Council at Singapore should visit the prisoners once a week or oftener if necessary."[1]

Before, however, permanent arrangements could be made for the confinement of the State prisoners according to the above instructions the Sheriff, Mr. William Scott raised a technical objection to their detention in Singapore on the advice of his legal Adviser Mr. J.R. Logan. The Legal Adviser was of the view that as Act III of 1818 of India did not apply to Singapore the prisoners would have to be set at liberty if a Writ of Habeas Corpus was made on their behalf before the Law Court. In view of the above objection, the Governor at once got the prisoners removed to the Subalterns Quarters in the Fort under military protection till the decision of the Government of India was received in the matter. He even suggested that as an alternative, the prisoners could be kept in Fort Cornwallis in Penang.[2]

[1] Secret Consultations, 31 May 1850, Nos. 18-19.

[2] Secret Consultations, 30 Aug. 1850, Nos. 45-47.

The legal tangle was, however, soon solved and the life convicts from the Punjab were duly lodged in the upper storey of the New Jail as per original plan. In a way, the fears of Mr. Scott and his Legal Advisers were misfounded because Maharaj Singh was hardly cognizant about the fact that he could be entitled to the protection of the rule of law in Singapore. Thus in the letter of 21 November 1850 the Governor of the Straits Settlements was therefore "happy to report to the Government of India that no movement has been made by the Gentlemen of the Grand Jury on their last visit to the Jail at the recent Criminal Sessions held at this station, which was marked by the absence of any Presentment." He also reported that the State Prisoners were in good health and, "appear as well satisfied as could be expected with the position in which they are placed." He further intimated that the total expense per month on their food, and the allowances paid to the cook and the Jailor did not exceed rupees 85 per month ; but in order to obviate the necessity of keeping a permanent military guard over them and also to ensure greater degree of security, the two windows in the prisoner's room were walled up and a strong iron gate was fixed in the verandah to separate it from the rest of the building. The result of these changes was that not only the area including the verandah was reduced to 41′ × 15′ but also that the cell became worse than a dungeon. It was therefore no wonder that Maharaj Singh very soon began to loose his eyesight, and symptoms of gout trouble became apparent within a few months.

In view of the fast deteriorating health of his guru Kharak Singh time and again protested to the authorities demanding better amenities. As his requests went unheeded he started expressing his concern directly to the Resident Councillor as and when the latter would pay a visit to their cell. This was taken exception to by the authorities and the Governor of the Straits Settlements wrote to the Government of India, on 24 January 1851 that, "It would appear that latterly, Khurruck Singh has given to bad temper by refusing his food, tearing the clothes off his own back, and throwing things at the head of the Keeper of the Jail, and when visited by Messrs Church and Hammond, his whole demeanour was so disrespectful, and offensive, as to make the former Gentleman, feel himself, lowered in the eyes of the sepoys, by being obliged to submit to such conduct. "Bhaie Maharaj Singh, on the contrary," the report continued, "expresses himself perfectly satisfied with every thing that is given him, and even evinces shame, and contempt, for the bearing of his fellow prisoner, which he not unfrequently endeavours to check." In a subsequent letter dated 5 August 1851, the Governor again wrote, "Mr. Church reports, that the conduct of Bhaie Maharaj Singh, continues, as it has ever been, since he came to the Straits quite unexceptionable."[1] The way Maharaj Singh faced all the trouble and privations with the utmost unconcern was quite in consonence with the traditions of the Sikh Gurus.

The forbearance shown by Maharaj Singh in

[1] Secret Consultation, dated 26 August 1853, No. 79.

adjusting himself to the new circumstances, was no doubt commendable but the age and the unhealthy surroundings were fast telling upon the health of this valiant freedom fighter, as may be evident from the half yearly report on his health, for the period ending with June 1853 which states, "Maharaj Singh, State Prisoner in His Majesty's Jail, has complained frequently of pain and swelling of his feet and ankles, and that he is now all but blind from milky cataract in both eyes." Under these circumstances and also in view of the proven conduct of the prisoner, the Resident Councillor suggested in July 1853 that, "some trifling degree of relaxation in the existing system might not, with propriety be conceded." He particularly recommended that the prisoners should be allowed to go out for airing twice a week in a palanquin, "of course escorted by European incharge of their Security." Unfortunately the Government of India was not prepared to concede even this limited freedom and turned down the recommendations of the Resident Councillor and the jail doctor.[1]

By this time, Maharaj Singh seemed to have been convinced that with his health deteriorating so fast he would not survive for long. He, therefore, thought of informing his followers in the Punjab about this fact. A letter written by Maharaj Singh and another by Kharak Singh were accordingly handed over to the authorities for onward transmission to the Punjab. These communications being innocuous were forwarded by the Governor of the Straits to the

[1] Secret Consultations dated 26 August 1859, No. 79.

Government of India for onward transmission to the addressees. They were, however, told that the Governor General was not in favour of their communicating with any one in Punjab. By now Maharaj Singh had become completely blind as confirmed by the jail doctor in his report submitted in January 1854. He also wrote that the removal of the cataract by operation "affords no great prospect of cure."[1]

During the next two years, Maharaj Singh developed another deadly disease viz., cancer of the tongue which became quite serious in 1856. Reporting in July 1856, the Assistant Surgeon J. Cowper wrote that, "Maharaj Singh's health during the last two months has been very much impaired, a cancerous sore has formed on the left side of his tongue, which on different occasions has caused considerale loss of blood, and the glands on the same side of the neck have become swollen and cancerous ; for two or three weeks he has eaten very little and for several days he has only taken a little conjee or wine and water. I have formed a very unfavourable opinion of the case and recommend that both prisoners may be allowed a little more freedom for the benefit of change of air, as the smell from the cancerous sore is very offensive and felt throughout their apartments."[2] He further said, "Maharaj Singh being in a very delicate state, I would recommend that he be allowed to drive in a *gharry* a few miles into the

[1] Secret Consultation dated 28 Feb. 1854, No. 94.

[2] Secret Consultation dated 29 August 1856, No.225.

country twice or thrice a week." The Governor had no alternative but to agree to the recommendation of the doctor pending further instructions from the Government of India But the guru was not destined to enjoy even this much of freedom. He expired on 5 July 1856,[1] of course fighting as doggedly with his disease as he had fought against the alien rulers a few years back.

[1] Op. cit.

IX

ROLE IN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Bhai Maharaj Singh's role in the freedom (struggle) could best be assessed by answering a few pertinent queries viz. :—

(a) Was Maharaj Singh really fit to lead a political movement as he did ?

(b) If so, was his leadership acceptable to all sections of the Punjabees ? and

(c) Whether he left behind any legacy of patriotism which could inspire the future generations ?

Maharaj Singh undoubtedly possessed all the qualities of a great leader. He was a selfless worker. His bonafides were never doubted by any one, even his adversaries. Being a saintly person, none was more eminently suited than him, to inspire all the high and the low to fight for the freedom of the motherland. It was also a fact that most of the Sikh chiefs at the Lahore Court were the devoted followers of this saint which considerably facilitated his task in organising the anti-British movement.

That the Bhai was also a great tactician is proved from the fact that before launching the freedom struggle he had shifted his headquarters from the village Nurangabad to Amritsar proper, the nerve centre of Sikh religion and politics.

Mr. Vansittart, Deputy Commissioner and Mr. Macleod, Commissioner, Jullundur, who had the occasion to study this man from a very close range have left detailed reports about his qualities as a leader.

Mr. Vansittart writes, "It is fair to assume that if Maharaj by a stay of 3 weeks in Doab caused the excitement which he did cause, the agitation in the more turbulent Manjha where he passed months, with which country he was so familiar, must have been deeper, and the expectation of a coming struggle more intense" He further states, "The Guru is not an ordinary man. He is to the natives what Jesus Christ is to the most zealous of Christians. His miracles were seen by tens of thousands, and are more implicitly believed than those worked by the ancient prophets."[1]

In his report to government dated 11 October 1850 Mr. Macleod writes, "It appears to me certain that the Gooroo was in some respects a very remarkable man. He seems to have possessed and exhibited very great sagacity and self reliance and while ; as stated by all his followers, he was exceedingly reserved in so much that his intentions were in reality fully known to none but himself until indicated by their result, he evinced an uncommon aptitude for forming general plans and having these simultaneously carried out by different agents, acting independently ; marks of great forethought and a design on the part of the Gooroo are apparent throughout

[1] Secret Consultation, 31 January 1850, No. 25.

all the narratives and the same characteristics has evidently distinguished him throughout his career. That he was enabled to collect some hundreds of men and concentrate them at a single point from various quarters is proved by what passed in Jammoo at an early period of his wanderings and I can readily believe, that these hundreds might have been increased to thousands, at a great crisis, seeing how extensively ramified were his machinations ; throughout not only the Doab, but also at all events, the Manjha and Malwa."[7]

Mr. Macleod also agreed with Mr. Vansittart that the main factor which qualified Maharaj Singh to take up the leadership of the movement was his religious status. "It is to the foregoing characteristic alone, as exhibited by him in the sacred character of a Gooroo that I attribute the very great veneration in which his name is undoubtedly held, to this day,"[2] said Mr. Macleod.

Referring to the remarkable role of Bhai Maharaj Singh in maintaining supplies of recruits and stores during the late battles, Mr. Macleod wrote, "Great as were the vicissitudes, trials and troubles, through which the Khalsah Army had to pass, during both campaigns, the Gooroo alone, was never found without resources ; any number of persons who might resort to him, and hundreds ; and sometimes it is said, thousands ; did so being, quite sure of obtaining from him their daily meal

[1] Secret Consultation, 31 January 1850, No. 25.
[2] Op. cit.

for the purpose of providing which he carried about with him scores of cooks or Langris, and the requisite materials."

Mr. Macleod, however, took pains to prove that the movement started by Maharaj Singh was limited mostly to the Sikhs. In support of this view he said that "One of his first acts on entering the Jullundur Doab was to send a special mission to Jandiala one of the principal Sikh villages in the heart of the Manjha tract to invite cooperation; Messengers were in like manner sent to the principal Sikh Jagheerdars perhaps almost without exception and when he sent a special messenger to Malwa; he was accompanied by Khizan Singh a disciple or Chela of Dewan Singh said to be the Chief *Gooroo* of that quarter." "I am not aware," continued Mr. Macleod, "that in any instance, the influential persons of other castes were similarly courted unless we except the overtures made to Dost Mohamed Khan which however can hardly be considered as a case in point and proved altogether unsuccessful."[1]

Mr. Macleod's above statement seems to be rather one sided as may be proved from the statement of Mr. P. Melvill, then officiating Secretary of Punjab and other available evidence on the matter. It was only in view of his popularity with all the cross sections of the population that Maharaj Singh was able to organize a powerful movement. Mr. Melvill states, "The Bhai was reverently considered by all classes of the native

[1] Secret Consultation, 31 January 1850, No. 25.

population not even excepting the greater portion of the Mohammedans to be imbued with miraculous powers rendering him an object of great reverence and his arrest has been manifestly distasteful to the native community generally."[1]

Firstly, it needs hardly be stressed that for the success of any movement a leader always draws upon the support of those, on whose loyalty he had the least doubt. It was, therefore, obvious that Maharaj Singh should have first looked forward to the support of the dispossessed Jagirdars and the retrenched soldiers of the Lahore Durbar who had suffered the most as a result of the British take over. Mr. Macleod himself testifies this fact in a very graphic manner. He writes, "It is worthy of remarks, that the persons to whom he addressed himself with utmost confidence, were for the most part our Jagheerdars. From whom, from their households, we have cut off the prospect they had heretofore enjoyed, of obtaining lucrative and honourable employment about the Lahore Court or in the Khalsah Armies. It is to be feared that no great amount of gratitude is to be expected from them, under any circumstances, as they must feel the tendency of our rule, to be opposed to the interests of their class." Continuing his statement, Mr. Macleod remarks, "It has struck me, as a touching incident, which has been elicited in the course of these enquiries that Gursah, once a Bhadech Jagheerdar of Shahkot, in Jalundur has turned Faqeer,

[1] Secret Consultations, January 1850, No. 25.

though I am not at present aware to what extent his position has been affected by the accession of our rule and I know it to be the opinion of some of our ablest officers not in this division only that a large proportion of the acts of violence which occur; even at this early period of our rule are to be traced to parties lately in comfortable circumstances, but now reduced by the disbanding of the Khalsah Armies and the operations of our resumption rules; to great distress." The above confession on the part of Mr. Macleod should act as eye opener. As such it was not unexpected that Maharaj Singh should have inspired ex-jagirdars and ex-soldiers to act boldly rather than succumb to the degradations to which they were being subjected by the foreign rulers.

Among others on whose support Maharaj Singh primarily depended were the priests and mahants, people of his own fraternity, who enjoyed rich endowments from the Lahore Durbar and had large followings. For this purpose Maharaj Singh particularly approached Bhais Nihal Singh and Kishan Singh who had large following in the North West, the priests of the Golden Temple Amritsar, Mahant Dewan Singh of the Malwa region across Sutlej and Mastgir Gossain in the Punjab hills. According to the statement of Nanoo Singh, Bhai Dewan Singh had once or twice met Maharaj Singh in the hills and promised, "to collect 20,000 men whenever the signal was given." Likewise in a meeting between Maharaj Singh and Mastgir Gossain near Datarpur the latter promised to collect 1000 Suniasees or recluses who he said "were wealthy and daring

men."

Another important community whom Maharaj Singh approached for active support were the Rajput Chiefs of the Punjab hills. For this purpose he had particularly gone to Jaswan, Nurpur, and Kangra. The Rajput Chiefs of this region were bitterly opposed to the British as they had also suffered on account of the policy of repression let loose on them, soon after the annexation of their territories to the British Empire. in 1846. Sohan Singh, a close follower of Maharaj Singh told Vansittart that at a meeting with Maharaj Singh the Rajputs of Datarpur stated that, "twelve of us were imprisoned by the Sahibs a year ago, let us have our revenge. We can get together ten or five thousand matchlocks in the hills and we will join you in the attack on Cantonments of Hajeepoor and Hoshiarpur." Bhupa and Gurdita ex-Quanoongos of the village Gurrha likewise promised to provide one thousand matchlockmen and money for the anti-British operations.

Maharaj Singh, however, had some difficulty in getting the active support of the majority of the Muslims and the Malwa Sikhs. The reasons for the non-cooperation of the majority of the Muslims with Bhai Maharaj Singh for the restoration of the Khalsa Raj may have to be looked elsewhere.

While it cannot be denied that Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors had always held their Muslim subjects in the highest-esteem and gave

them positions of great eminence and trust in the civil and military administration of the Kingdom, there were a few delicate issues which the shrewed British officials were quick to exploit with a view to creating religious animosity among the Sikhs and the Muslims. Firstly, the Pathan tribes on the Indus, though subdued by the Lahore Durbar by a combined strategy of coercion and conciliation, had never reconciled themselves to their changed political status. This fact was known to the British officials with the result that even during the military operations against Afghanistan, 1839-42, these officials had started inciting and instigating the Pathan tribes against the Lahore Durbar. During the revolt of Dewan Mul Raj and Sardar Chatter Singh Attariwala, Herbert Edwards, Abbot and George Lawrence actually succeeded in using those Pathans against the rebels on the plea that they should avenge the death of their kith and kin at the hands of the Sikh soldiers in the not very distant past. It has already been noted in the foregoing chapters how Henry Lawrence had won over the Muslim Chiefs of the trans-Indus region by favourable land settlement terms and then used them against the freedom fighters.[1]

The ban imposed by the Lahore Durbar on cow killing was yet, another, vulnerable issue between the two communities which the shrewed British officers exploited to their benefit. Significantly enough

[1] The Marquis of Dalhousie's Administration of British India by Edwin Arnold, p. 98.

instances of cow killing by the Muslims particularly in the tribal areas began to be reported soon after the British took over the administration of Lahore Durbar. In his report to the Governor General dated 2 February 1847, Henry Lawrence writes, "A considerable discussion about the punishment proper for several Mussalmans in the Provinces who have been guilty of cow killing. It appeared that the offences had been committed since the date of the new treaty (Bhyrowal treaty signed in December 1846), and as it is probable that the offenders believed English rule and English customs were now established in the Punjab I advised the Durbar to suspend judgment till they had enquired more fully into the matter."[1]

Similarly the existing ban on saying *azan* by Muslims in the mosques was a fit issue which the British were keen to exploit for their imperial interests.

The Chiefs of the Lahore Durbar opposed the relaxation of this ban on the plea that "people will deride them for giving permission to make the call, which has been prohibited for the last 80 years."[2] The matter drifted for some months more, but ultimately on December 7, 1847, John Lawrence then Acting Resident at Lahore got the order issued, "that no one shall interfere with the Moosulmans, when crying out to prayers, so long as the British Force remains at Lahore."[3]

[1] Lahore Political Diaries, Volume III, p. 18.

[2] Ibid, p. 372.

[3] Ibid, p. 378.

These measures among others naturally earned for the British the gratitude of the Muslims making them less keen for the restoration of the Khalsa rule, although they may have no fancy for the foreigners as well.

As regards the Malwa Sikhs, it won't be correct to say that they abstained from cooperating with Maharaj Singh as a body. The Bhai, as is known, himself belonged to the Malwa region and he had a large number of followers from that side. What he did not get was the supply of men and war materials as promised by Bhai Dewan Singh for which there could be so many reasons. Moreover, as most of the Malwa region was under the Sikh rulers of the Phulkian Misl, these Chiefs could not have any sympathy with the movement started by Bhai Maharaj Singh. On the contrary they acted as break waters against the anti-British movement. How the interests of the two clashed may be proved by the following episode.

Dewan Mul Raj, after his rebellion against the British, wrote several letters to the Maharajas of Patiala and Nabha and Sardars of Bhadaur, Malodh, Gopal Singh Singhpuria, Sobha Singh Kalsia and Dina Singh of Bhaidwans requesting them to join against the British in the name of their religion and culture. But these Chiefs used to pass on that correspondence to the British Political Agent for appropriate action, whereas hundreds of Malwa Sikhs on their own accord crossed the Sutlej to join their brethren in Multan and elsewhere to fight

against the British intruders.[1]

Be as it may but the main problem for Maharaj Singh was not as to whether he enjoyed the backing of each and every community and section in the Kingdom, as it has rarely happened under such trying circumstances anywhere. His main worry seemed to be as to how many persons from among those who had promised support would actually come forward when needed. To be sure about that Maharaj Singh had to send his trusted followers repeatedly to various places. One of the reasons for this uncertainty, according to Mr. Macleod, was the religious status of Maharaj Singh. He wrote "possession by Maharaj Singh of the character of a Gooroo appears also to have been a source of deception, even to himself, for strong is the obligation felt by every Sikh to appear at least to accede to the injunctions of his Gooroo but that it must have been difficult to distinguish between the homage accorded on this ground, and the more hearty cooperation resulting from a real interest in the cause."

New Stratagy Planned

Maharaj Singh, however, seemed to have been quite alive to all these limitations. Actually it was the result of this awareness that Maharaj Singh adopted the selective approach of attacking the British Cantonments and Treasuries one by one. His main aim in doing so was to re-convince the people that the British might could and should be

s Secret Consultations, 25 November 1848, Nos. 233-37.

challenged. As a great strategist he selected the Cantonments of Hajipur and Hoshiarpur for his first assault. Apart from other considerations, these places, situated as they were at the foot of the Shivalak hills, afforded to the freedom fighters an easy escape into the hills if necessary. His plan also included the rescuing of freedom fighters from the jails with the connivance of the native military soldiers posted for guard duties and of kidnapping British Civil officers for the purpose of jeopardising administration in the Districts.

Commenting on the new plan Mr. Macleod writes, "It would appear,prima facie, almost incredible, that their first and almost exclusive aim, should have been directed towards those very points, where we are strongest viz., our military Cantonments. Yet it does not admit of a doubt that such is the fact. The seizure of the Civil Officers of Government probably as hostages being also contemplated, a subsidiary object. I cannot find any trace or acknowledgement of the Jalundhar Cantonment having been examined though as it is said, that endeavours were made about the month of September, to temper with some men of the Sikh Regiment, on duty at the Jail of that station, it is probable that an inspection of it was made . . . and it is certain that such was the case, in regard to Lahore. Wuzeerabad, Hoshiarpore, and Hajipoor of which the first alone, was reported to be so strongly and vigilantly guarded, as not to admit of it's being attacked; while as regards Battala, one of the emissaries, proposing

that the Civil Officers should be murdered, as there were no troops there at all, the Gooroo is said to have forbade this and to have directed that they should be merely seized and brought to him." He further continues, "that the attack made upon the European quarters at Lahore by a party, who were I believe, without doubt, connected with the Gooroo, and the cutting down of Mr. Blythe, by men who were amongst his most trusty followers; are incidents which give additional credibility to these assertions and truth. It appears to be at present the characteristic of the old Seikh soldier resulting partly from the spirit of daring and enterprise which distinguishes their race and partly from the conceit and arrogance which a long career of successful domineering on the part of the soldiery has engendered to attempt only the most desperate, and despise all inferior undertakings."

Mr. Macleod closes his report with a claim that the seizure of Maharaj Singh and his loyal associates, had completely disheartened and demoralized the people thus preventing any future chance of rebellions. He states, "it cannot, I think be regarded otherwise, than as a fortunate circumstance and yet more so; that they have appeared on every occasion, as on the present one, to cast their fortunes on the single throw so that when this has failed; they have been, for the time at all events; completely prostrated. I have nẹver witnessed despondency on the part of men of vigorous minds, more complete, than that exhibited by the most earnest of the Gooroo's followers. Mr. Vansittart quotes the ex-

pression used to him, to have been that they consider the Punjab now to have been conquered and to myself many of them have remarked; that the Gooroo having now three times successively failed in his predictions, in which they had placed implicit confidence, the spirit of the Punjab was effectually broken and the British Government might do with it what they liked."

Concluding from the above, Mr. Macleod prophesied that with the arrest of Bhai Maharaj Singh the struggle for freedom may be taken to have finally collapsed. He stated "that the failure of their project, for carrying off the young Maharajah, and capture of most of the intriguers, the comparative failure of the attack upon the European Barracks, and that upon Mr. Blythe must have tended to show men less infatuated ; on how hopeless an enterprise they had entered. But the greatest check of all received by them, appears to have been in the seizure of the Sardar Sher Singh & ca. with whom there appears to be no doubt they had some understanding. Even within their own circle of those to whom they made overtures ; there are not a few, who declared that they dared not to venture—at all events until they should see some greater prospect of assurance of success which feeling also evidently actuated many others, who did not avowedly confess it while several openly ridiculed the entire project. The impression which I derive from hence, combined with the utter failure of the Gooroo's project is, that there can be no ground to apprehedd that any similar attempts will

be made, while matters remain as at present. There appears to me to be much too little of unanimity on the part of the people and too decided a conviction of the power and the vigilance of the Government to say nothing of the perfect contentment with the change of rule, undoubtedly felt by a large portion of the community to admit of there being any very general combination for such reasonable purposes and this as I have stated appears to be the conviction of those persons themselves, who have heretofore made the attempt."

Mr. Macleod's conviction that there was little likelihood of any fresh adventure of that type being made in the near future was thus based on the fact that side by side with the policy of repression, the British had also created new vested interests in their favour with a view to foiling any popular rising in future. Within a few years of the change a new aristocracy had come into existence on whom the British had lavishly showered all honours and high offices. They belonged to all communities, Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. Besides, the policy of poising one community against the other was continued and large numbers of frontier muslims, whose antipathy to the Sikh rule was well known, were recruited to the police, military and para-military establishments to counter any risk from the Hindus and the Sikhs. Also, the rationalized system of taxation, low rate of land revenue, improvement of trade and commerce due to surety of law and order and a judicious and enlightened system of administration followed by the British were sure to

leave their impact even in the hearts of their once staunchest enemies.

Legacy of Patriotism

The above alignment could no doubt be lasting only if men were to live by bread alone. The way the people of Punjab continued to yearn for self-rule even thereafter, is a sufficient proof that Bhai Maharaj Singh had left behind a strong legacy of Patriotism.

After Bhai Maharaj Singh was deported to Singapore Maharani Jindan continued to give lead to the Punjab freedom fighters from Nepal, where she had escaped after fleeing from the British custody. In one of her letters addressed to the family of one ex-General Kahan Singh of Lopoke, near Amritsar, the Maharani wrote, "Make it known to the Manjha country that in the month of Kooar, when the insurrection break out at Peshawar you must also rise." Although the above insurrection did not come up, partly due to the vigilance of the British authorities and partly because the Maharani failed to get the active cooperation of Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu and Kashmir and Dost Muhammad Khan the Amir of Afghanistan, yet the anti-British elements in the Punjab never gave up heart. On the contrary a regular tracking of Patriots from the Punjab to Nepal continued right upto 1859, with a view to getting money and directions from the queen mother for carrying on the freedom struggle. Among them were respectable persons like Pandit Badrinath, a close relation of

Raja Dina Nath, one of the few loyal Chiefs of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Maharani's secret letters and messages were usually conveyed during 1857-59 through a Banking House in Amritsar owned by Sardar Charat Singh and his son Ram Singh.[1]

As a result of these activities and the example set by Bhai Maharaj Singh the most commonly heard sentence all over the Punjab during the Great Rebellion of 1857 was "Maro Firangi Ko", do away with the British imperialists. This came about inspite of the claim made by Sir John Lawrence then Chief Commissioner that, "the general disarming had produced a change in the national habits. The rougher and the sturdier classes felt that they were unprepared for the strife and that they were destitute of one principal means of resistance." But in the same report Sir John Lawrence himself admits that "when Cantonment after Cantonment in Hindustan was destroyed and destroyed by its soldiery, who rushed to Delhi, when incendiary letters arrived, figuratively indicating the position of the British in India . . . . then the Punjabees began to feel how utterly isolated we were and how desperate was our case. Their minds passed from confidence to doubt, then to mistrust, and then to disaffection. This last symptom had begun to set in when Delhi fell."

Commeting on the attitude of the various communities of the Punjab this time, Sir John

i Secret Consultations, 17 June 1859, Nos. 124-47.

wrote : "The Mahomedans, after a time began to think that the day of our rule was drawing towards its close, and that time had come when they should strike for power and for plunder." As regads Sikhs he said, "One decade only had passed when they were the dominant power in the Punjab. The memory of the Khalsa or Sikh Commonwealth may sleep, but is not yet dead. A spirit of nationality and military ambition still survive in the minds and hearts of thousands among the Sikhs. It were vain to suppose that thoughts of future triumphs and future independence did not cross the imagination of these people, that aspiration of restoring the Khalsa were not existed during the summer of 1857.

Although the loyalty of the Urban Hindus was taken for granted by the British authorities, yet the Chief Commissioner lamented that they had not lavishly subscribed to the public loan floated by the Government in order to meet the mounting expenses of administration during that emergency. He writes, "The mercantile class, though some of them contributed largely, as a body withheld their money, thereby disappointing expectations which might have been fairly formed on account of their known wealth and prosperity . . . their tardiness and unwillingness in this matter indicated their opinion regarding the character of the contest in which we were engaged."

Thus one finds that the so called peace in the Punjab during 1857-58 was secured by ruthless suppression rather than any sense of deep seated

love and loyalty in the minds of the Punjabis for the British. It is a recorded fact that during the dangerous phase of the rebellion Indian Civilians in high positions suspected of even minor misdeamenour, were hanged by the dozens. Scores of Punjabi deserters from the various regiments were chased and shot dead and hundreds placed behind the prison bars. Bairagees, sadhus and followers of the derahs of Bhais Bir Singh and Maharaj Singh were made a special target of this policy. The latter's name was of such a great dread to the British, that his successor Maharaj Singh the junior was arrested while giving religious surmons to his disciples in a village 16 miles away from Amritsar. Bedi Bikram Singh who was allowed to live peacefully at Amritsar after his surrender to the British in 1849 was prohibited to go out for the next six months for his daily horse ride. The British nicknamed him as "the sacerdotal high priest of infanticide notoriety."[1]

None of the foregoing repressive measures could, however suppress people's love for freedom as soon after Baba Ram Singh's Namdhari or Kuka movement, which had its formal origin on the fateful Baisakhi of 1857, just a month before the outbreak of the great rebellion, became a powerful nationalist force in the Punjab by the middle of the 19th century. For this reason Guru Ram Singh had to pay ths same price as was paid by Maharaj

i Punjab Governmant Records, Mutiny Reports Volume III, Part I, pp. 271 and 273.

Singh earlier. Reporting on the genesis of the Namdhari movement Mr. J.P. Warburton, who had close acquaintance with the activities of the Kukas since 1872, wrote "that the movement from the beginning was manifestly directed against the existing government and in the recorded opinions of the most competent authorities of that time, involved a serious menace to the peace of the individual districts "[1] During the early 20th century the Babar Akalis and other revolutionary groups also came into existence for the purpose of fighting British imperialism, although the Indian National Congress, thereafter dominated the scene till the country became independent in 1947.

Thus ever since Bhai Maharaj Singh gave a clarion call to the Punjabis to get rid of the foreign rule, the struggle for freedom continued unabated although its methodology had to witness many a change in accordance with the varying circumstances.

If not for anything else let us cherish the memory of that saint pioneer freedom fighter, the great martyr for the cause Bhai Maharaj Singh.

1. Extract from the notes on Kukas. Residency records of the Office of the Political Agent, Phulkian State and Bhawalpur.

X

HIS CLOSE COMPANIONS

From the information supplied by the persons arrested along with Bhai Maharaj Singh at Sham Churasi, the British authorities came to know that many of his close companions were still at large in the territory of Maharaja Gulab Singh.

Writing about the urgency of their seizure, Mr. P. Melvill, Secretary to the Board of Administration, Punjab, wrote on 9 August 1850, that "the apprehension of those fifty or sixty men is the most important, that from among them, or from none, must the imposter arise who may assume the title of Maharaj. The minds of the people are not indisposed to give credence to such an imposition", he cautioned.[1] As a result of prompt action, about thirteen of those persons were arrested from Chumbi area in Jammu.

In the meantime two more important adherents of the guru had already fallen into the hands of the British. One was Gurmukh Singh of Kandola a Kahar by caste, who used to cook for the guru. He was arrested at Jullundur from among the crowd, who had gathered near the Civil Jail soon after Maharaj Singh was brought there for detention. Gurmukh Singh had been with Maharaj Singh

[1] Secret Consultation, dated 31 January 1851, No. 22.

ever since the battle of Ram Nagar, but was not with him at the time the latter was arrested. Another person namad Baj Singh or Bhag Singh was accidentally captured by Major Lake at Peshawar.

Of the twenty persons arrested along with Maharaj Singh, eleven had deposed before the Deputy Commissioner of Jullundur, that they had no intention to rebel, but had merely stopped to pay their respects to the guru, while casually passing that side. But their assertion was hardly believed. Commenting on their depositions Mr. Melvill wrote that, "they are for the most part just the class of persons of whom his adherents were chiefly composed and doubtless would have evinced no disinclination to attach themselves to him, had circumstances been favourable." According to him "they were mostly jats or Kalal Sikhs belonging to those very villages, which had supplied some of the Guru's most energetic agents."[1] The following among them would certainly deserve a mention in the pages of history.

KHARAK SINGH

Kharak Singh was to Maharaj Singh, as the latter was to his master Bhai Bir Singh. Nothing is known about this man beyond the fact that he was a jat by caste and preferred to remain with his guru even beyond the high seas where he served him faithfully till his last breath.

[1] Secret Consultation, dated 31 January 1850, No. 21.

GURMUKH SINGH

He was in the great confidence of Maharaj Singh. He had actively helped the Bhai in organizing the anti-British movement while at Devi Batala. He also accompanied him to Hoshiarpur, and helped him in contacting many local people for looting the government treasury at Bajwara.

BAHADUR SINGH

He met Maharaj Singh in Kuleran and went to Zahoorah with Sham Singh for the collection of men and materials for the revolt From there he went to Sujuwal and later toured with Maharaj Singh in the District of Hoshiarpur. He was present at Sham Churasi when Maharaj Singh announced his final programme of rebellion.

KAHAN SINGH BHIKHIWINDIA

He was in the company of Maharaj Singh during the battles of Chillianwala, Rasul and Gujrat. He fled with the master to Jammu, and played an important role in establishing contacts with Wazir Ram Dass. He also supplied some mares to the followers of the guru. He was deputed to Amritsar to make preparations for the revolt by the Sikhs against the British. The Government had put up a reward of Rs. 300/- for his arrest.

NARAIN SINGH

He was an Arora Khatri of Behrampura near Batala. He was proficient in reciting verses

from the Granth Sahib for which purpose he was summoned by Maharaj Singh to Rawalpindi along with Sarup Singh before the battles During the battles, he was deputed to Jammu for purchasing grain for the Khalsa army. He also gave money to Jawahar Singh who was deputed by Maharaj Singh to get Maharaja Dalip Singh released from British custody. He also financed the trip of Bhai's emissaries to Bhai Kishan Singh in the North-West, and gave a sum of rupees 203 to the guru at Kandola. He was widely travelled person having gone upto Calcutta.

ISSAR SINGH

He belonged to the Doaba. He assisted Maharaj Singh in contacting officers of Sikh Regiments at the Hoshiarpur Cantonment He later toured the area around Tanda. He confirmed that the entire Sikh nation was behind Maharaj Singh.

NIHAL SINGH

He was a Jat of Naushera near Taran Taran in Amritsar. Met Maharaj Singh at Devi Batala, where he along with others were advised to disperse in order to avoid detection. Accordingly he moved to Jogewal, and thence to Kaleran, finally joining the Bhai at Sujuwal. He was assigned the mission of procuring swords from Charat Singh an ex-Kardar. He was also deputed to Amritsar to meet Bhai Tek Chand to whom Maharaj Singh had sent turbans for distribution among the volunteers and zamindars who had offered to fight against the

British. From Amritsar he had gone to Lahore and Wazirabad for collecting information about the strength of British forces at those Cantonments. He accompanied the Bhai to Hoshiarpur, and was present at Sham Churasi when the day for general rebellion was announced. He was arrested in the company of Maharaj Singh, but was released soon after. According to his statement nearly 2,000 men were ready to join the rebellion in the Doaba.

SUBA SINGH

He also belonged to the Doaba. He had gone to Multan in the company of Maharaj Singh. He again joined the guru at Devi Batala, and followed him to Chumbi. On failure of Maharaj Singh's plan to capture the fort of Ram Nagar Suba Singh returned home, but again joined Maharaj Singh at Kurala and toured in Hoshiarpur and adjoining areas collecting men and materials for the rebellion.

KISHAN SINGH

He belonged to the Jullundur Doab and met Maharaj Singh at Ramdolah. He was asked to collect the residents of surrounding villages at Sham Churasi, where the guru held a great congregation. He confirmed that Bahadur Singh, Kahan Singh Bhikhiwindia and Dharam Singh were appointed leaders with instructions to collect 5,000 volunteers each.

JAIMAL SINGH

He was related to Kahan Singh another trusted

follower of Maharaj Singh. He was invited to join the guru whom he met at Kandola. He was asked by Maharaj Singh to assist Kishan Singh in the collection of voluteers.

GULAB SINGH

He was a jagirdar of Doaba. He joined Maharaj Singh at Kandola and was present at the congregation held at Sham Churasi. He confirmed that the secret activities of Maharaj Singh were known to all the Sikhs, but none was prepared to divulge the secret and all were ready to join him if he had not been caught. On the direction of Maharaj Singh, Gulab Singh had written letters to various leaders saying "Let all true Sikhs attend (the congregation at Sham) on the day fixed."

AMIR SINGH

He was an Akali and had fought in many battles. He was present with Maharaj Singh when the Deputy Commissioner Vansittart came to seize the party near Sham Churasi. Amir Singh accordingly attacked Mr. Vansittart with his axe, but before any harm could be done to him the latter wounded Amir Singh with a pistol shot. He died three days later.

DHARAM SINGH

He was a fakir of the village of Gagarpani. He helped Maharaj Singh in the collection of men and materials for the revolt and was captured with him at Sham Churasi. According to Mr. Vansittart, Dharam Singh was a notorious dacoit who had fled

from jail sometime earlier. "He was most deeply implicated in the Doab," said the Deputy Commissioner.

MOHRA

He belonged to Wazirabad and was Brahmin by caste. His brother Prema was earlier involved in the famous Prema Conspiracy Case. He was one of the most determined followers of Maharaja Singh and moved with him during the latter's stay in the Province of Jammu. At Sujuwal he assured Maharaj Singh of the support of the entire population of Jasrota region. The Government was put to great trouble in tracing his whereabouts after the arrest of Maharaj Singh

BHAG SINGH

He is variously mentioned as Bhag Singh and Baj Singh. He was also the disciple of Bhai Bir Singh. After the death of his guru, Bhag Singh is reported to have gone to South India probably on a pilgrimage of the holy places connected with the Sikh Gurus. On his return he joined Maharaj Singh at Amritsar just before the Bhai had gone underground to escape arrest by the British in connection with the Prema Conspiracy Case. Thereafter Bhag Singh went to Jawala Mukhi in Kangra from where he went to join Maharaj Singh before the battles. After the defeat of the Attariwala Chiefs, Bhag Singh went to Peshawar and later to Devi Batala where Maharaj Singh also joined him. At Sujuwal Bhag Singh was deputed by Maharaj Singh to carry his

letter and *Khillut* to Bhai Nihal Singh the popular Sikh priest at Kalabagh. After a stay of two months at Kalabagh Bhag Singh returned to the Doaba and delivered Bhai Nihal Singh's letter to Maharaj Singh at Kurala in which the Sikh priest had assured all possible help to Maharaj Singh in his anti-British movement. From Kurala he was sent to take charge of Maharaj Singh's camels in Jammu. After the arrest of Bhai Maharaj Singh Mr. Vansittart's men pursued Bhag Singh upto Jhelum but failed to capture him. Later on he accidentally fell into the hands of Major Lake at Peshawar.

BHAI TEK SINGH

He was the priest at the Golden Temple Amritsar. On receiving a written message from Maharaj Singh, he came to Jullundur Doab with 30 to 35 persons to participate in the struggle. He evaded arrest for a considerable time.

BAHADUR SINGH

He was a Jat of the village of Nanku in Jullundur. He is said to be responsible alongwith Dharam Singh for inducing Maharaj Singh to set up his headquarters in the Doaba for starting anti-British operations from there. He was arrested along with the master.

GURDIT SINGH

He was Ahluwalia by caste, but was then leading the life of a recluse at Fatehabad in the Kapurthala State. He met Maharaj Singh at Sujuwal and

thereafter remained with him. He was seized at Sham Churasi along with Maharaj Singh.

KANH SINGH

He was also a Jat of Fatehabad. He had joined Maharaj Singh at Amritsar before the start of the rebellion in 1848 and had participated thereafter in all the battles. He was seized along with Maharaj Singh.

ISHAR SINGH

He was a Jat of Aokari Ghata and had earlier served in the Khalsa army. He accompanied Maharaj Singh during his tour of Hoshiarpur and the adjoining towns. At the time of the arrest of the guru, he was not with him but was arrested later on. He was, however, taken into service by Mr. Vansittart, considering that he would not prove dangerous if suitably employed.

MAYA SINGH

He was a Saini by caste and belonged to Naushera. He had earlier served as a horseman with Sardar Sobha Singh of Ram Nagar, but after the battle of Ram Nagar he joined the volunteer corps of Bhai Maharaj Singh and participated in the battles of Rasul and Gujrat. After the defeat of the Sikh forces Maya Singh accompanied the guru to Rawalpindi and then to Devi Batala, and Sujuwal. Thereafter he was sent to Lahore, but was arrested soon after the seizure of Bhai Maharaj Singh.

SOBHA SINGH

He was a Jat of the village Buchhawari. He joined Maharaj Singh on his march to Multan and remained with him throughout till he left for Devi Batala after the battles. He again joined the guru at Kurala and accompanied him to Hoshiarpur and other places for collecting men and materials for the rebellion. He was then sent to meet Col. Budh Singh on a similar mission, just before Maharaj Singh was arrested.

GULAB SINGH

He was a Jat Jagirdar of Talwandi in Hoshiarpur district. He joined the guru at Zahura. On the guru's advice, Gulab Singh drafted an *Ardas* or appeal to the Sikhs of Malwa region of the Punjab for help against the British. He was sincerely attached to the master and acknowledge that he was prepared to render him all assistance for the noble cause.

DHARAM SINGH

He was a Jat Sikh of village Chitti in Jullundur. Aided by Bahadur Singh he was responsible for bringing Bhai Maharaj Singh to the Jullundur Doab and helping him in anti-British activities. He was arrested alongwith the Bhai but escaped later on. As a result of which a reward of rupees five hundred was announced for any one apprehending him. He was re-arrested at Wazirabad and imprisoned in the Lahore Jail.

BASAWA SINGH

He belonged to Nurpur Chopra. He was responsible for taking Maharaj Singh's letters to Kabul and bringing back their replies including one from Amir Dost Mohammad Khan ruler of Afghanistan. Thereafter he remained with the master during his travels in the Doaba but was not with him at the time of his arrest near Sham.

JAWAHAR SINGH

He also belonged to Nurpur Chopra and joined Bhai Maharaj Singh at Devi Batala. He was left at Chumbi when the Bhai abandoned that place, but joined him at Zahura He was one of the most trusted followers of the guru and a man of considerable importance.

HARI SINGH AND DAL SINGH

Both of them belonged to Pindori near Taran Taran in Amritsar District. They helped Maharaj Singh by rousing the people of Manjha region against the British.

RAM SINGH

He was a recluse putting up at Zahura in Hoshiarpur. He not only invited Bhai Maharaj Singh and party to stay at his dharamsala, but aided them in every other way in getting into touch with the influential persons of the area He was arrested at Lahore but released later on when he proceeded on pilgrimage tour However, according to the

recommendation of Mr. Macleod, the Commissioner, Ram Singh's dharamsala was demolished by way of punishment.

KAURA SINGH

He was an influential person of Sujuwal in Batala and one of the chief advisers of Maharaj Singh. At Sujuwal the guru and his party had stayed at his residence He also allowed grams to be stored in his house for use during the operations against the British With the help of Jawala Sing and Basawa Singh of the same place, Kaura Singh had made all arrangements for rebellion in the area.

Besides these, the names of Charat Singh a Zamindar and ex-Kardar of Taran Taran. Jawahar Singh of village Sirhali, Jhanda Singh of village Tibhar in Batala, Ala Singh of village Rara in Malwa. Jawahar Singh of Rohtas, Prem Singh of a place near Aurangabad and an ex-Commandant, Ram Singh of village Rawal, Hari Singh of Amritsar and Dewan Singh of Sangrur in Jind, were among the many known and unknown followers of Maharaj Singh who actively supported the movement at a considerable risk to themselves.

May their memory last for ever